Mr. Ken Salazar  
Secretary of the Interior  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

We are pleased to submit to you the Management Plan for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area pursuant to Title VIII, Subtitle A of Public Law 111–11.

For the past 11 years a broad array of partners in Colorado’s lower San Luis Valley have pursued recognition of our unique heritage by undertaking a feasibility study, obtaining Congressional designation of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, and collaborating on a plan that will promote widespread public appreciation of nationally significant historic, cultural, and natural resources under the care of many organizations, agencies, and private individuals. We envision implementation of a comprehensive program of interpretation, preservation, revitalization, and stewardship aimed at raising awareness about our common heritage, energizing our communities, honoring and perpetuating our traditions, and contributing to the quality of life of our citizens.

We sincerely appreciate the support that the Congress, the President, your Department, and you personally have provided to our efforts. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a grassroots initiative of many community-based and regional organizations and individuals. The guidance and support of the Federal government in general and the National Park Service in particular have been crucial in catalyzing the initiative and providing it with the visibility and resources necessary for its success. We look forward to our continuing partnership.

Sincerely yours,

Lawrence Gallegos  
Chairman

P.O. BOX 844, ALAMOSA, CO 81101, INFO@SDCNHA.ORG
Dedication

Ubaldo Francisco “Frank” Padilla returned to his roots in Costilla County in 2007 after a long life of public service. He was among the early leaders serving on the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s Board of Directors. His family remembers that among his favorite sayings was, “Don’t forget your roots and where you come from!” Frank thrived as a community advocate, directing the San Luis Valley & Southern Colorado Low Income Tax Clinic and volunteering for the Land Rights Council and Los Padres, a father/son/daughter mentoring-parenting program. As chairman of the Costilla County Democratic Party in 2008, he attended the county, state, and national conventions as a strong supporter of President Obama. Frank was born in San Pablo and raised by his grandmother. He attended Mercy High School, where he was in the National Honor Society and lead conductor for the school band. At age 15, his grandmother passed away and he moved to Laramie, Wyo., where he graduated from high school and studied accounting at the University of Wyoming. In 1961, he enlisted in the US Air Force, serving as a Morse Code Interceptor during the Vietnam War. In 1965, he trained as an Air Traffic Controller, which – along with his Spanish speaking skills – took him to the Panama Canal Zone, where he served for two years and later returned to work. He also worked at the Denver Control Center, 1976 to 1981, and owned and operated Padilla’s Janitorial along with his wife and daughters, 1981 to 1987. Returning to federal service in 1987, he worked for the US Department of Labor as a compliance specialist until his retirement in 1999, a short-lived retirement as he then continued a career with Ford Motor Credit Company until returning to the San Luis Valley.

Emerita Romero-Anderson was one of the early leaders who initiated the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. She participated in the feasibility study and was among those who presented it to Congress. Her life was tragically cut short by a rare cancer in the spring of 2012. On her personal website she wrote, “A Colorado native, I wake up to a glorious sunrise over the Sangre de Cristos and the scent of piñon pine rising from chimneys. My birthplace, San Luis, is a small community with a richly woven tapestry of Hispano culture, traditions and family history, which reveal an important part of our national story.” Her mother was a fifth-generation descendant of Spanish colonials who were Colorado’s first settlers – including the builder of the state’s oldest store, still being run by the family; her father’s people were the mestizo (Indian and Spanish mix) who came to Colorado from New Mexico. She studied education at Adams State and earned an M.A. in bilingual/multicultural education from the University of Northern Colorado. A teacher for 27 years, she worked in public schools in Colorado and Guam, USA, and in continuing education at four colleges and universities. She also authored acclaimed children’s books: *Grandpa’s Tarima* (The Wright Group/McGraw-Hill, 2001); a biography of her great-great-grandfather, *Jose Dario Gallegos: Merchant of the Santa Fe Trail* (Filter Press, 2007); and *Milagro of the Spanish Bean Pot* (Texas Tech University Press, 2011), recipient of seven awards to date, including the National Western Heritage Museum’s award as Outstanding Juvenile Book. The *Latino Author* website says, “Emerita’s passion for writing and telling her people’s stories was sparked by her strong desire to get more books in circulation about Latinos, by Latinos into the hands of children….Her legacy will be found in the compassionate stories she told in her books about her heritage and about her culture.”

In the fall of 2012, we were saddened again by the tragic loss of a member our Board of Directors, Dr. Stuart Hilwig, Adams State University professor of history, to an auto accident. Dr. Hilwig loved the San Luis Valley and its rich history and was a talented professor at Adams State University who brought out the best in everyone he met. Dr. Ed Crowther, the chair of the History, Government, and Philosophy department, told ASU’s The Paw Print website, “He had a well-deserved following because he was an outstanding instructor. He loved being an historian, but he loved teaching students even more than he loved history.” Dr. Hilwig earned his B.A. from Vanderbilt University in 1991 on a full scholarship and studied history at Ohio State University for his master’s and Ph.D., completed in 2000. Raised in Allentown, Pa., he became interested in European History due to experiences as an exchange student to Germany and while working for Sicilian immigrants in a pizzeria. He joined the Adams State faculty in 2000, where he taught European and Latin America history and historiography. He received the university’s Exemplary Faculty Award for 2005–2006, served as president of the faculty senate from 2005 to 2007, and was faculty representative to the Colorado Commission on Higher Education in 2005–2006. His book *Italy and 1968: Youthful Unrest and Democratic Culture* was published in 2009 by Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, part of his body of “plentiful and original” scholarly work mentioned in the American Historical Association’s *Perspectives on History* (December 2012), where he was also praised as an eloquent lecturer, vigorous researcher, and keen analyst.
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Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve

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Kathy Faz
Patrick Myers
Ayesha Williams

Intermountain Regional Office

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WE ARE PARTICULARLY GRATEFUL TO THE ALAMOSA, CONEJOS, AND COSTILLA BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, WHO HAVE CONTINUED TO PROVIDE DEDICATED SUPPORT AND RESOURCES TO THE SANGRE DE CRISTO NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA THROUGHOUT ITS DEVELOPMENT.
HOSTS OF PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE MEETINGS IN 2010

City of Alamosa
Town of Blanca
Village of Capulin
Village of Conejos
Village of Hooper
Town of La Jara
Town of Manassa
Town of San Luis
Town of Sanford

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR GENUEROS ASSISTANCE, SERVICE, ADVICE, TIME, AND PARTICIPATION IN THE MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS:

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Patrick Gonzales, Assistant Refuge Manager

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Kathy Rogers, Mayor

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Andrew Archuleta, Field Manager
Alicia D. Beat, Archaeologist
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Jill Lucero, Wildlife Biologist

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Ann Marie Velasquez
Adele Barr
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David Van Berkum

Costilla County Lodging Tax Board
Nick Quintana
Marvin Casias
Roger Hogan
Leo Schmitz

Fort Garland Revitalization Committee
Helen Gonzales
Ila Gonzales
Rick Manzanares

The Land Rights Council
Norman Maestas, Executive Director
Juanita Martinez

Office of U.S. Senator Mark Udall
Erin Minks

Alamosa Tourism Development Board and Marketing District Board
Jeff Woodward, President
Tom Bobicki, Board Member
Fred Bunch, Board Member
Jamie Greeman, Executive Director
Matthew Beckner, Graphic Designer/Webmaster
Carol Osborn
David Osborn
Volunteers serving the Colorado Welcome Center

Antonito Depot Task Force
Ted DeHerrera
Jay Warner

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Lauren Buchholz, Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

Costilla County Economic Development Council
Curtis Garcia
Bernadette Lucero
Huberto Maestas
Rick Manzanares
Theresa Medina
Lawrence Pacheco
Bob Rael
Felix Romero
Emerita Romero-Anderson

Fort Garland Museum
Rick Manzanares

History Colorado
Edward C. Nichols, President/CEO

History Colorado State Historical Fund
Cynthia D. Nieb, Deputy Director
Steve Turner, Director

The Nature Conservancy
Paul Robertson, Project Director

Office of U.S. Senator Michael Bennet
Charlotte Bobicki

Office of U.S. Congressman Scott Tipton
Brenda Felmlee
Old Spanish Trail Association
Douglas M. Knudson, President
Suzy Off

Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative
Judy Lopez, Conservation Education Specialist

Rio Grande Scenic Railroad
Ryan Weeks, Operations Manager

San Luis Valley Development Resources Group
Michael Wisdom, Executive Director
Roni Wisdom, Chief Financial Officer

San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition
Julie Gallegos, Program Director

San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center
Donna Wehe, Director

Town of San Luis
Theresa Medina, Mayor
Gabrielle V. Aragon, Town Trustee

San Luis Valley GIS/GPS Authority
Pete Magee, PhD, Executive Director
Rachel Doyle

San Luis Valley Museum Association
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CONSULTANT TEAM

Heritage Strategies, LLC
A. Elizabeth Watson, AICP, Project Manager
Peter C. Benton, RA, Preservation Planner
Krista L. Schneider, RLA, Historical Landscape Architect

National Trust for Historic Preservation, Heritage Tourism Program
Amy Jordan Webb, Heritage Tourism Planner

Progressive Urban Management Associates
Anna Jones, Principal Community Development Planner
Erica Heller, Research Associate
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Cover photographs, from top left: Steam engine on the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, photo by Ann Marie Velasquez; hiker in the wilderness of Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, with the Sangre de Cristo Mountains as backdrop, photo by Scott Hansen, courtesy National Park Service; “Dios es Amor” (God is Love) gate and San Rafael Presbyterian Church (1880), Mogote, restored with the help of the History Colorado State Historical Fund, photo by Ann Marie Velasquez; Fort Garland commandant’s quarters, photo by Peter C. Benton, Heritage Strategies, LLC; the People’s Ditch in San Luis, the first acequia in Colorado (1851), photo by Peter C. Benton; Rio Grande style of Spanish Colonial weaving by National Heritage weaver Eppie Archuleta, credited with saving the tradition and the type of loom used, photo by Kathleen Figgen; one of the Stations of the Cross sculptures by Huberto Maestas, which is located along a steep trail to the top of San Pedro Mesa overlooking San Luis, photo by Peter C. Benton, Heritage Strategies, LLC; grassland sunflowers, photo by Patrick Myers; sheep grazing in San Luis shrublands ecoregion in northern Conejos County below the foothills of the Rio Grande National Forest, photo by Peter C. Benton. The photo by Kathleen Figgen is courtesy of the Southern Colorado Council on the Arts Folklorist Collection, Adams State University, Nielsen Library.

Photographs throughout the management plan were taken by Peter C. Benton, RA and A. Elizabeth Watson, AICP of Heritage Strategies, LLC, except where otherwise noted. We are grateful for all contributions. Report design by Krista L. Schneider, RLA, LEED-AP of Heritage Strategies, LLC.
Chapter 1 • A Vision for the Heritage Area

The Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range rises dramatically above the intricately woven tapestry of farm fields, settlements, creeks, wetlands, and a diversity of plant and animal communities. This complex landscape is one of the most unique and well-preserved cultural landscapes in the nation.

Introduction

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area was established on March 30, 2009 in Public Law 111-11 for the purposes of providing an “integrated and cooperative approach for the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area.” Stunningly beautiful natural resources and a rich mixture of Hispano and Anglo settlements converge here to make this one of the most unique and well-preserved cultural landscapes in the nation.

As stated in the feasibility study that led to its recognition by Congress, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area represents a “profound historical, religious, cultural, ethnic and bio[logical] diversity that historically served as a staging ground for a new nation that was being redefined. Hispano, Anglo and Native American cultures interacted in this area, witnessing the convergence of the old with the new” (Shapins, 2).

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area tells the stories of the peoples, culture, and environment of the lower San Luis Valley and its adjacent mountains. Through its stories, the National Heritage Area builds public awareness of the valley’s significant legacies, supports the local economy through heritage tourism, and strengthens communities by facilitating local initiatives.

The heritage area encompasses more than 3,000 square miles of the upper headwaters of the Rio Grande in Colorado’s San Luis Valley, a prominent feature of the southern Rocky Mountains. The San Luis Valley is bordered by the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range on the east and the San Juan Mountain Range on the west. In English, “Sangre de Cristo” translates as “Blood of Christ,” a 17th century name owing to the mountains’ red glow from the setting sun on rare, spectacular occasions. Taller and more dramatic, the Sangre de Cristos most distinctly characterize this landscape, the reason the name was chosen for the National Heritage Area. No matter where one finds oneself within the heritage area, a beautiful mountain view either east or west is likely to be part of the scene.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area includes Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla Counties at the southern end of the San Luis Valley. The Alamosa, Baca, and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges and the Great Sand Dunes
Note: the following is drawn from Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Feasibility Study (2005, by Shapins Associates), the report that led to the National Heritage Area’s designation in 2009 by Congress. The National Heritage Area is significant for its unique ecology, Native American occupation, early Hispano settlement, American westward migration, and the evolution of the San Luis Valley’s agricultural economy.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area represents a profound historical, religious, cultural, ethnic, and biologic diversity, and historically served as a staging ground for a new nation that was being redefined. Hispano, Anglo, and Native American cultures interacted in this area, witnessing the convergence of the old with the new. Mt. Blanca, located just southeast of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, marks the eastern boundary of the Navajos’ worldly domain as told in their folklore. It is one of the four sacred mountains of the Navajo Creation Story in the Navajo religion. The geographic isolation of the area has essentially preserved cultural identities of... [Hispano and other non-indigenous] groups. At times this is evident in the seventeenth century Spanish still spoken within the heritage area.

The dynamics of its history and the diversity of its land and peoples make this area an integral and important part of the overall national story. Buffalo hunting and the indigenous nomadic life gave way to Penitente moradas, Mexican Land Grants and later to the military, railroads, mining, foreign labor and a new way of looking at the land. Explorer Zebulon Pike, who was captured by Spanish soldiers in 1807 in this area, was the first American to provide a detailed description of this part of our nation. Pike’s rebuilt stockade remains a symbol of the expansionist nature of our nation during that crucial time of exploration.

Human settlement of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is directly associated with its geological [and natural] resources. The region’s wealth of valuable resources, scenic splendors, and culturally based historical assets has origins founded in the Valley’s geological history. The layered water systems of this area first brought in game that consequently attracted many tribes of Native peoples, who traveled long distances, attempting to create stores for the winter. As time went on Hispano settlers were enticed by the water to raise crops and sheep, followed by Anglo farmers raising cattle and wheat, and today potatoes, alfalfa and lettuce.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area represents the crossroads of cultures, where Spanish, Anglo, and Native Americans converged...as America moved westward. The spirit of independence and self-reliance, an important national value, remain as legacy to those first courageous settlers who fought many odds to make this their home (Shapins 2005, 2).
Figure 1-1: Context map showing boundaries of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.
To tell the unique story of this National Heritage Area and its people while connecting the local story to the broader story of the settlement of the Southwest and emphasizing the relevance of the region’s legacy to today’s culture and society; and

To help preserve the physical and cultural landscapes of the southern San Luis Valley and its many traditions, revitalizing its communities and thereby positively affecting the region’s economic sustainability.

A Brief Description of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Snow-capped mountain peaks, the Rio Grande and its tributaries, forested hills and ancient volcanic mesas, enormous sand dunes, and thousands of acres of wetlands are but a few of the natural sights to behold in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. Perhaps the most unusual sights are the flocks of sandhill cranes that pass through in the spring and fall, and the sand dunes, the nation’s highest. The latter are tucked into an angle of the Sangre de Cristos and sustained by a cycle of water and wind that has no equal anywhere on the planet, the focal point of one of the quietest national parks in the lower 48 states. The permanent preservation of many of the valley’s landscapes and ecosystems is one of the most important success stories in Colorado, if not the nation. Such an accomplishment is the result of hard work of many agencies and nonprofit organizations and the goodwill of many private landowners, with more preservation efforts expected in the years to come.

Large bales of alfalfa hay are common sights throughout the San Luis Valley, a major agricultural region in Colorado.

Many physical resources pertain to Hispano heritage, such as the historic plazas, placitas, moradas, churches, cemeteries, hundreds of miles of hand-dug irrigation canals called acequias, and small-scale ranches and farms. A branch of the Old Spanish Trail between Santa Fe and California passes through the region, hardly visible on the landscape. Recognized by the National Park Service as a National Historic Trail, its story is only beginning to be told. A state scenic byway, Los Caminos Antiguos, interprets the region’s Hispano history and the landscape as it links Antonito, San Luis, Fort Garland, the national park, and Alamosa.

Cultural traditions are as varied as the National Heritage Area’s natural and historic resources. In the southeast corner of the area, settlers from Mexico founded San Luis, the state’s oldest town, on April 5, 1851. They brought with them Spanish traditions handed down from at least the 17th century, mingled with New World knowledge gleaned from interaction with indigenous American Indians of today’s American Southwest and Mexico. Dance, music, an archaic Spanish dialect, foods, farming, weaving, and embroidery are among customs that have persisted and enrich local culture today.

Others followed from the United States after the region was ceded by Mexico at the end of the Mexican-American War (1846-48) beginning with Mormons in the 19th century. Over succeeding decades still more groups arrived - including Swedes, Dutch, Germans, and Japanese. Quite recently, the Amish have settled here, drawn by rich farmland like their predecessors. Modern
occupations include farming and ranching, including a growing number focusing on local foods amongst irrigated fields of alfalfa and potatoes; plus a strong medical and academic community and the host of other occupations needed in modern communities. An unusual element is the large number of artists, drawn by the culture, the landscape, and the simple life possible here.

The San Luis Valley is one of the highest settled areas in the lower 48 states. At 7543 feet (2299 m), Alamosa is the lowest of the four largest towns in the heritage area. San Luis sits at 7979 feet (2432 m); Fort Garland at 7936 feet (2419 m); and Antonito at 7890 feet (2405 m). It is said that the valley floor, about 7,000 feet closer to the sun than most growing areas in the nation, produces vegetables especially high in vitamins. Runners train here to gain high-altitude advantage in competition.

That altitude means that the region’s newest wealth may soon be found in the solar energy collectors that are beginning to dot the landscape. The process may be accelerated by a reduction in center-pivot irrigation occasioned by Colorado’s recent regulation of withdrawals from the massive aquifer that lies beneath much of the valley. For many years, those withdrawals were less strictly regulated than withdrawals from the river’s flow, which are regulated in order to deliver water downstream by agreement with New Mexico, Mexico, and Texas. Without precious water, much of the land cannot be farmed, supporting only such austere high desert vegetation as rabbit brush and sagebrush. Solar energy “farming” needs far less water.

The underlying land ownership patterns today in Conejos and Costilla counties owe much to the way the New Mexico Territory was governed by American hands after the Mexican-American War ended in 1848. Mexican owners of extremely large land grants and settlers they encouraged in order to maximize their investments were affected in varied ways despite the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago that continued their ownership under American law. Some held on to their land, passing large tracts down to modern ownership; others lost it in adversity, sometimes overwhelmed by American legal requirements. The Rio Grande National Forest in Conejos County arose from federal land acquisition early in the 20th century where confusion surrounding ownership was a part of the story. The same thing did not happen in Costilla County to the east, where owners more successfully defended their rights.

In an irony belonging to the late 20th century, however, Conejos profits today from its adjacency to the national forest and its many recreational opportunities. Costilla’s community of San Luis, on the other hand, still exercising common rights to land, has engaged in a bitter fight with landowners who closed off long-standing traditional access to the surrounding hills that offered forage and wood. Almost overnight after a closure in the 1960’s, families left the valley, never to return, and ranchers shifted from sheep to cattle, a profound change in the culture. Today, after a decades-long legal battle that is yet to be completed, those rights have been partially restored; the community now faces the challenge of teaching its children how to use them.

Alamosa, the youngest of the four largest communities, is by far the largest and the modern economic center of the entire six-county San Luis Valley. It was built by the railroad that first traversed the valley and houses Adams State University and a regional hospital, among other major employers. Visitors to the valley are most likely to be familiar with Alamosa, as U.S. Route 160, the major east-west highway of Colorado’s southern tier, forms its spine and also passes through Fort Garland and its sister village, Blanca.

**The National Heritage Area’s Beginnings**

Much of the interpretive and organizational framework for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is built upon earlier work of the planning committee that was formed to develop a collective vision for Los Caminos Antiguos (LCA). This was designated as a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway in 1991; an additional extension was designated in 1992, and in 1994 the Bureau of Land Management designated the
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LCA as a Back Country Byway. Travelling through Alamosa, Costilla, and Conejos counties, the byway was established in order to "interpret, facilitate community development, and market the products of the cultural and historic traditions, natural resources, and diverse communities" of south central Colorado.

Early work included visitor and community surveys, public meetings, personal interviews, interpretive planning, the installation of interpretive kiosks, production of promotional and tourism materials, and the development of a corridor management plan (CMP).

During the development of the CMP, the National Heritage Area concept was introduced as a possible way of developing the area for tourism consistent with the beliefs and customs of local residents. In 1998 Los Caminos Antiguos Association incorporated as a nonprofit organization to oversee byway initiatives, and the following year the CMP, Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway Partnership Plan, was produced to identify priority projects.

In 2001 the LCA Association began holding public meetings to determine the wishes of communities and residents with regard to the possibility of establishing a heritage area. Response was positive, and a Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Steering Committee was formed to spearhead efforts that would result in National Heritage Area designation. These efforts included public meetings, research, a symposium entitled "El Agua, La Cultura, Las Placitas," and local government resolutions supporting National Heritage Area development. In 2005 the steering committee produced the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Feasibility Study, which was written by local and regional historians, writers, and scholars (with assistance from Shapins Associates), to formally seek federal designation.

In 2005, 2007, and 2009 Senator Ken Salazar introduced bills to establish the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in the United States Senate. Legislation including S. 185, the 2009 heritage area bill, was passed by Congress and officially signed into law on March 30, 2009 by President Obama as the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009, Public Law 111-11. Two other National Heritage Areas in Colorado were designated within the same law, the Cache La Poudre River National Heritage Area and the South Park National Heritage Area.
**The National Heritage Area’s Legislation**

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area was designated in Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001 of Public Law 111-11. The legislation established boundaries for the heritage area; designated the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors as the heritage area’s management entity; and directed that a management plan be developed for approval by the Secretary of the Interior. Overall, the management plan’s purpose is to identify the goals, policies, strategies, recommendations, and actions to be undertaken through the collaboration of a broad range of partners.

The enabling legislation for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is included as Appendix A of this plan. The legislation outlines the requirements related to the establishment and management of the heritage area. Key elements of the legislation are summarized below.

**Coordination – Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors**

The management entity charged with coordinating and implementing the heritage area is identified as the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors (Board of Directors). According to the legislation, the Board of Directors is to include representatives from a broad cross-section of the individuals, agencies, organizations, and governments that were involved in the planning and development of the heritage area before its designation.

The primary duties and authorities of the management entity include preparing and submitting a management plan for approval by the Secretary of the Interior, and assisting units of local government, regional planning organizations, and nonprofit organizations in carrying out the approved management plan by [paraphrased from the legislation]:

- Carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values;
- Establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs;
- Developing recreational and educational opportunities;
- Increasing public appreciation for the National Heritage Area’s natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources;
- Protecting and restoring historic sites and buildings consistent with National Heritage Area themes;
- Ensuring the posting of clear and consistent signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest;
- Promoting a wide range of partnerships among governments, organizations, and individuals to further the National Heritage Area; and
- Encouraging economic viability “by appropriate means…consistent with the Heritage Area.”

**Management Plan**

Section 8001(d) of the legislation states that this management plan shall:

- Incorporate an integrated and cooperative approach for the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources of the heritage area;
- Take into consideration state and local plans;
- Include an inventory of the resources located in the core area and any other property in the core area that is related to the themes of the heritage area and should

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**Primary Goal 2 for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area**

Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization.

**Goal 2-6, Interpretation:** Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth. (The themes identified in the feasibility study are: An Alpine Valley’s Wind, Water and Sand Dance; Land of the Blue Sky People; Interwoven Peoples and Traditions; and Hispanic Culture, Folklore, Religion and Language.)

**Goal 2-7, Culture & Community:** Protect and celebrate living heritage resources – language, art, traditions, spirituality, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.

**Goal 2-8, Agriculture:** Promote and interpret agriculture as a way of life, a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape, and as a critical contributor to regional economic health.

**Goal 2-9, Community Awareness:** Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.
Primary Goal 3 for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Cultivate excellent management that provides regional leadership, reflects community values, and achieves sustainability.

Goal 3-10, Organization & Management: Strengthen the organization’s capacity to achieve its mission through a strong and diverse board of directors, resourceful collaboration and alliances, regular measurement of progress in implementing the management plan, financial stability and expanded funding, and sufficient staffing.

Goal 3-11, Communications: Establish open and consistent communication with partnering organizations, governmental representatives, and the public; build recognition for the National Heritage Area and those involved in its progress.

Goal 3-12, Engaging our Young People: Stimulate involvement of young people in all aspects of the National Heritage Area’s work, learning opportunities, and participation.

Goal 3-13, Partner Development: Stand behind partners; assist and lend credibility to their endeavors. Emphasize networking, skill-sharing, coalitions, joint ventures, and other working relationships among partners as the primary means of building the heritage area and accomplishing its goals in a mutually beneficial way.

be preserved, restored, managed, or maintained because of the significance of the property;

• Include comprehensive policies, strategies and recommendations for conservation, funding, management, and development of the heritage area;

• Include a description of actions that governments, private organizations, and individuals have agreed to take to protect the natural historical, and cultural resources of the heritage area;

• Include a program of implementation for this management plan by the management entity;

• Identify sources of funding for carrying out this management plan;

• Include analysis and recommendations for means by which local, State, and Federal programs, including the role of the National Park Service in the heritage area, may best be coordinated;

• Include an interpretive plan for the heritage area; and

• Recommend policies and strategies for resource management that consider and detail the application of appropriate land and water management techniques, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the heritage area.

Private Property and Regulatory Protections

Nothing in the legislation abridges the rights of any public or private property owner, as provided in Section 8001(f). No privately owned property will be preserved, conserved, or promoted without the written consent of the property owners. The legislation does not require any property owner to permit public access; participate in heritage area plans, projects, programs, or activities; or modify land use under any other land use regulations. It also does not alter any duly adopted land use regulation or approved land use plan, nor authorize or imply the reservation or appropriation of water or water rights.

Vision, Mission, and Goals

The mission of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is to promote, preserve, protect, and interpret its profound historical, religious, environmental, geographic, geologic, cultural, and linguistic resources. These efforts will contribute to the overall national story, engender a spirit of pride and self-reliance, and create a legacy in the Colorado Counties of Alamosa, Conejos and Costilla.

The Board of Directors developed the following vision statement with the assistance of the National Park Service in the months leading up to the formal planning process:

Nuestra Voz – Our Voice

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area captures the essence of who we are, allowing us to impart our stories and preserve our heritage through our collective vision and creativity. Our spiritual, historical and cultural traditions, including reverence for land and water, assemble an extraordinary legacy to impart with current and future generations. Our communities are united in promoting the sacred center of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area landscape – our living history – as a sustainable, national and international destination while enhancing the quality of life for our residents.

Based upon the mission and vision of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area presented above, at the beginning of the formal planning process, the Board of Directors developed three primary goals to guide heritage area management planning and implementation:
• Support development of a **vibrant heritage tourism sector** that stimulates preservation, economic development, and community revitalization;

• **Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area** in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization; and

• **Cultivate excellent management** that provides regional leadership, reflects community values, and achieves sustainability.

The Board of Directors developed a thorough and ambitious set of goals that flesh out these three primary goals; they appear as sidebars in various locations throughout this chapter and in chapters where they are addressed.

**Planning for the National Heritage Area**

The planning process that was used to arrive at this final management plan is described in Appendix B, The Planning Process. In brief, the Board of Directors developed goals based on the National Heritage Area’s legislation, the wellspring of all the tasks that heritage area partners will undertake in the years to come. Following consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, they considered the interaction of the programs that could be developed to reach those goals, looking holistically at the implications of their choices. Their considerations and conclusions guided the development of this detailed management plan. Public meetings conducted throughout the process provided many ideas and sense of priorities.

This management plan has been prepared with the expectation that it will guide the Board of Directors and heritage area partners for the next 10 to 15 years. It is intended to comply with requirements of the heritage area’s enabling legislation.

Chapter 1, this chapter, provides information on the background of the heritage area, its enabling legislation, and the planning process and a summary of all other chapters. It is meant for wide publication to explain the National Heritage Area.

Chapter 2, The Natural Landscape, presents a brief overview of the heritage area’s natural history and resources.

Chapter 3, The Cultural Landscape, summarizes the heritage area’s cultural history and resources. Not intended to be a detailed or comprehensive history, Chapter 3 simply establishes the scope of the region’s historical context that is the subject of the heritage area’s preservation and interpretive interests. An inventory of the heritage area’s natural and historic resources is presented in the 2005 Feasibility Study and summarized in Appendices C and D.

The Alamosa Round-Up Cattle Drive and Rodeo Parade. The week-long rodeo that this event introduces has been held for more than 30 years (courtesy Alamosa Round-Up, photo by Peter Piepul).
One of the areas of greatest need identified by participants in the planning process was historic preservation. This is among the heritage area’s highest priorities. If we do not save our historic assets, we lose touchstones of our culture and history. Heritage area partners recognize that the National Heritage Area is home to a rich mosaic of living cultures, rooted in history but continuing to evolve today. The National Heritage Area’s cultural traditions are closely intertwined with and expressed through its communities and its landscape. These two ideas of living cultural traditions and a living cultural landscape are central to the heritage area’s approach to historic preservation.

The goal of the heritage area is to place cultural values at the center of community interests. We will accomplish this by raising public awareness and by realizing the economic benefits of heritage-based initiatives. Each chapter of this management plan plays a role in this concept. Historic preservation concentrates upon recognizing and preserving the physical components of our heritage that illuminate our history and give our communities their unique character. Historic preservation is an essential component of community revitalization. The National Heritage Area’s approach to historic preservation includes the following four strategies:

- **Connect with federal and state initiatives:** Important work in recognizing and identifying cultural landscapes and associated historic resources is happening at the federal and state levels through several initiatives. It is important for the heritage area to be at the center of these efforts so we can connect with and build from them. While they are being undertaken by others, the heritage area should support them, participate where feasible, incorporate them into heritage-area initiatives, and identify follow-up to support preservation within the heritage area.

- **Continue to inventory and study historic resources:** Good historic preservation practice is founded on comprehensive inventories, deep understanding of history and significance, and documentation of existing conditions. We need to know the extent of the problem and the possibilities. While there is an existing database of historic resources within the Valley, it represents only a first, thin layer of what should be developed and maintained. Modern mapping, photography, and database technologies make it possible to create an excellent inventory, to integrate advance information about historic resources into public decision-making, and to use it for public education as appropriate. Well-organized volunteer and student labor can support much of the work.

- **Provide regional leadership in developing public appreciation, advocacy, technical information, and training to encourage local action:** The heritage area offers an opportunity to develop preservation leadership at the regional scale, where economies of scale and cross-jurisdictional relationships and technology transfer could prove highly beneficial. At the core of the heritage area’s role
are encouragement, support, and leadership for local governments and grassroots advocates for preservation initiatives within our communities. The heritage area must build public trust in preservation initiatives. The interpretation program described in this plan offers a “bully pulpit” to reach out to residents. The more authentic resources they can preserve, the more they can explain their stories within a meaningful context. A regionally based organization is well-positioned to develop close working relationships with such knowledgeable advisors as Colorado Preservation, Inc., History Colorado, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation on behalf of local partners. In addition, the heritage area can become the regional historic preservation advocate.

- **Provide technical assistance and financial support:** The heritage area will coordinate and in some cases provide technical assistance and financial support for local preservation initiatives, including both community planning and specific projects. Technical assistance and funding for projects (feasibility studies, market analysis, building assessments, treatment plans) at an early stage can inject important information and momentum into the implementation process. A well-established competitive grants program can have a large impact in providing support for projects, encouraging their development, and providing visible signs of progress and investment in historic preservation. As of this writing, the first heritage-area matching grants drawn from early-action federal funding by the Board of Directors have been awarded to several local historic preservation projects.

**APPROACH TO CONSERVATION AND RECREATION (CHAPTER 5)**

This region’s historic and cultural heritage stems from its roots in a rich, intriguing natural environment that has long offered many opportunities for engaging with the outdoors. Today, opportunities for use of the natural environment are many and expanding. Encouraging public appreciation and protection of these resources is a never-ending need; fortunately, there are many helping hands, and much collaboration. The heritage area can address needs for greater public information and deeper interpretation.

The San Luis Valley as a whole is singularly blessed with truly marvelous natural resources that are well protected and publicly accessible. Outdoor recreation opportunities of a wide variety are available to residents and visitors alike. Hundreds of thousands of publicly owned acres are managed by the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, and Colorado state agencies. The City of Alamosa bought historic ranchlands on its edge that are now partly accessible for public recreation, and is planning greater accessibility through the construction of a western pedestrian bridge crossing near Adams State University. Costilla County has developed a major plan for trails and open space county-wide with assistance from the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program. The state of Colorado recently issued a significantly improved version of a statewide birding guide with three trails that intersect with the heritage area. The Rio Grande has been accorded a special BLM designation as a “natural area” from the southern edge of the Alamosa NWR to the Colorado line.

The Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, Colorado Open Lands, Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust, and others have worked successfully for many years with property owners to protect private lands voluntarily in the entire watershed through conservation easements. The three national wildlife refuges are among the nation’s oldest. Along with other lands protected by Colorado State Wildlife Areas and The Nature Conservancy’s preserves, they protect significant habitat along the westernmost edge of the nation’s Central Flyway, with more to come in voluntary partnership with private landowners thanks to recent conservation planning for the refuges. Although most notable for sandhill cranes, the region possesses a wide variety of birdlife, wildlife, and vegetation and an abundance of rare and endangered species, thanks to a wide range of ecological niches within one geographic region. The nonprofit Colorado Field School and Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative both work to acquaint residents, students, and the general public with the special nature of the local environment.

This plan includes the following approaches to land stewardship, natural resources, and outdoor recreation:
Forge close ties and partnerships with federal, state, and regional land stewardship entities: The heritage area can partner with and support stewardship, education, recreation, and land conservation initiatives led by these agencies and organizations. It can also encourage their continuing collaboration on “big picture” approaches and cooperative programming, and serve as a supporting resource on developing opportunities, facilities, and best practices.

Build public awareness through interpretation: While the cultural dimensions of this remarkable environment are significant, identifying and interpreting these dimensions are not necessarily the focus of public and private land-managing agencies. The heritage area can enable land stewardship entities, visitors, and residents to better understand human associations with the region’s natural resources within the context of the heritage area’s interpretive themes.

Build visibility of existing opportunities and encourage public access: The heritage area can encourage public access through making more complete information available and easily accessible to residents and visitors; encouraging eco-tourism initiatives and other outdoor recreation programming offered by organizations, clubs, and private providers; and helping to improve existing public access facilities. A public lands information center of the quality to match the lands involved, as a joint project among land managers, the heritage area, local governments, and other nonprofits, could be a long-term, outstanding project to serve those who find their way into the heritage area. Recreational clubs active in the San Luis Valley and other organizations, such as the Friends of the Great Sand Dunes National Park, could be encouraged to collaborate with local outfitters and guides and programs of the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) Watchable Wildlife to present special opportunities to experience the backcountry. Planning for public access must take account of and preserve the rare experiences of solitude and quiet that are available now.

Promote recreation-related business development: The heritage area can encourage interaction with the natural environment by promoting recreation-related business development and eco-tourism entrepreneurship.

Support planning and development of local and regional recreational trail networks: The heritage area can support local and regional trail and interpretive initiatives. The heritage area can also work with local and county governments to encourage additional trail planning and development, particularly in areas where visitor services are already provided, or where trails will complement heritage tourism initiatives.

Support watershed restoration efforts: The heritage area can play a supportive role in promoting watershed restoration efforts and educational initiatives. Where possible, it also can play a leadership role in coordinating interpretation of water resources within the broader context of the region’s cultural heritage. Opportunities also exist for the heritage area to promote the development of water-oriented recreational opportunities – both physical and programmatic – to include water and river tourism-related business development.
**Approach to Conserving Community and Tradition (Chapter 6)**

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area can provide leadership in encouraging communities, schools, and residents to be fully engaged in the mission of conserving a sense of community and tradition. It can encourage learning opportunities that demonstrate the importance of the region’s cultural heritage and provide support to existing programs and new initiatives that build both community and visitor awareness of the heritage area’s character and significance.

The heritage area’s cultural heritage is expressed through a variety of means. While some communities, churches, and other institutions sponsor formal educational programs, others engage residents and visitors alike through festivals, art shows, museums, farmers’ markets, musical performances, and youth programs. All keep alive the rich cultural traditions that reinforce community identity and instill local pride. Chapter 6 includes many sidebars and photos describing the cultural wealth this National Heritage Area has to share and treasure.

It is not possible to “preserve” culture and tradition in the same sense that we would preserve or restore an adobe church or other historic or traditional structure. Culture, like nature, is always changing. It is possible, however, to recognize the conditions that surround and support culture and tradition, and based on that knowledge, to design programs that support and celebrate community and heritage. The objective is to create the context in which individuals, families, groups, and communities can maintain cultural traditions, transmit them to the next generation, and take advantage of opportunities as they arise, whether those opportunities are economic, performance, or educational in nature.

In order for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to thrive, residents, communities, organizations, and institutions must be fully engaged in conserving and promoting the region’s cultural heritage and identity. Creation of a rich and diverse program of community education and engagement will be stimulated through five strategies:

- **Creating and promoting a heritage pride and community memory program so that residents come to view themselves as an integral part of the heritage area and help to record cultural traditions and memories.** While the National Heritage Area’s interpretive strategy should help answer the question “What is the meaning of this place?” the self-identification strategy that grows from the ideas in this chapter should encourage residents to answer the question: “How do I see myself belonging to this place?” Given the strong sense of pride in self-reliance, rugged individualism, ethnic diversity, and cultural association with community, church, and place, this self-identification strategy should encourage multiple narratives and means by which groups and individuals can selectively represent themselves and their differences and commonalities.

Since so much of the cultural significance of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area stems from its residents — their families, traditions, faith, and communities — it is important that any initiatives designed to promote local interest in and support of the heritage area allow residents the opportunity to personalize their relationships with it. Self-identification should instill pride and a sense of
belonging within a broader history and place that all have helped to shape. At the same time, promotion and communication of the public presence of the heritage area needs to be well-structured and cohesive enough that the identity of the heritage area as a whole is clear and comprehensible to residents and visitors alike. Potential activities include “community memory” activities, “virtual story board” (using programs like Facebook’s “group” feature) to create shared memories, a community archive or repository, such community-building/placemaking actions as communities creating markers or locally inspired public art, offering markers to historic homes – much like the current Centennial Farm recognition – or recognition of treasured sites, as appropriate, in the landscape guide recommended in Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation.

- Coordinating and encouraging community engagement in arts and cultural programs and events that build community awareness and understanding of the heritage area’s resources, character, and significance. Despite its relatively small population and community size, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brims with opportunities for residents to participate in or contribute their skills to high-quality art programs and exhibits, musical and dance performances, and community festivals and special events where these talents and traditions take center stage. Encouraging the creation of self-guided walking and auto tours that describe cultural heritage in relation to historic and natural resources in communities, on farms, and in the landscape, the heritage area can stimulate local awareness of the value of local sites, arts, and traditions.

- Developing well-designed youth education programs that increase understanding and appreciation of local history and culture, and their relationship to the long-term sustainability of the region. Colorado has made visual and performing arts, including music, dance, and theater, core to both the primary and the secondary curriculum. Local history, local arts, and local culture, however, are not emphasized through any formal curriculum standards, and students often graduate without a full understanding or appreciation of the cultural significance that is unique to San Luis Valley (i.e., land ownership and use, local dialect, folk arts, dance, music, agricultural traditions, ethnic food traditions, etc.). This is a missed opportunity to help local youth not only understand their past and define their self-identity within the region’s broader cultural context, but also enrich their education by exploring ways in which they may personally contribute to the conservation of their communities and cultural traditions. Teachers, schools, parents, and the students themselves can be enlisted in this effort, through training, collaborative programs, demonstration initiatives, etc.

Participants in the planning process made it clear that they hold a deep sense of unease about this missed opportunity in the face of accelerated cultural homogenization that is happening across all American communities. The heritage area can give voice to these concerns and a place where assessments and strategies can be undertaken, and where progress can be
Engaging young people in leadership development and creating a deep understanding of community functions, needs, and priorities is a good investment in lasting leadership for this National Heritage Area and our communities and could potentially lead to initiating future employment opportunities. The challenge is encouraging the region’s youth to take a leadership role in preserving the region’s heritage, conserving community traditions, and developing heritage tourism programs that expand economic development opportunities. Partnerships with the schools are critical to achieve this objective, but it may also take collaboration with a wide range of civic organizations as well.

- **Encouraging continued dialogue and action reflecting the deep community awareness of agriculture’s cultural ties and possibilities for community and economic well-being.** Like arts, music, and dance, food reflects the cultural diversity of the heritage area. Whether it is the method by which it is grown or raised, prepared, served, preserved, or eaten, food is perhaps one of the most personal and perpetuating means by which family and community traditions are kept alive. Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, where agriculture has served as the foundation of the region’s economy, food takes on an even greater importance. With a renewed interest in ethnic and locally and sustainably produced foods, several notable public and private initiatives have been undertaken to promote and preserve the region’s food traditions and agricultural heritage.

### Approach to Interpretation (Chapter 7)

This management plan presents the interpretive structure for telling the heritage area’s story, which also guides preservation and other planning recommendations in other chapters. The building blocks of a complete, enhanced interpretive experience in the National Heritage Area include:

- **Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway**, a Colorado state scenic byway, is the primary means through which the landscape’s resources and experiences are threaded together. It is the way in which the overall landscape can be experienced. Interpretively focused upon the valley’s Hispano culture, the byway links communities and sites within the heritage area and features orientation kiosks and interpretive waysides along its route. The Old Spanish National Historic Trail, which follows part of the same route, is under development and will add to the National Heritage Area’s ability to satisfy the interests of visitors seeking to traverse the entire region.

- **Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and the Fort Garland Museum**, the National Heritage Area’s leading interpretive sites, the former focusing on natural resource themes and Fort Garland on early settlement. Both work to inform visitors of other opportunities for exploring the region and are represented at heritage area board meetings.

- **The Cumbres & Toltec and Rio Grande Scenic Railroads**, popular visitor attractions that provide a broad experience of the landscape. The arrival of the railroad in the late 1870s was a defining element in shaping the valley’s history. Today these two rail lines are centerpieces of the region’s visitor experience.

- Local museums, including the **San Luis Valley Museum**, Adams State University’s Luther Bean

### Goals for Interpretation

**Interpretation (2-6):** Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth.

**Community Awareness (2-9):** Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.
Museum, Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center in San Luis, Sanford Museum, and Jack Dempsey Museum. Each is tailored to the interests and stories of their locale, and provides a rich, friendly, and highly personalized experience that presents the region as well as individual communities.

• Other protected natural landscapes in addition to the Great Sand Dunes, including three national wildlife refuges, numerous state wildlife areas, and the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan Mountains with their extensive trail systems. These are places where the details of the valley’s distinct landscapes and ecosystems are best experienced. Due to limits in available funding, formal interpretation is modest. Water is the valley’s big – and untold – story, whether speaking of natural systems or the agriculture upon which communities and residents depend. Understanding the aquifers and how water works within the valley is key to understanding its ecology, its communities, and its character.

• The National Heritage Area’s communities are where the region’s cultural heritage is experienced. Each has a distinctive character and distinctive stories. Some are confined to a particular cultural group, while others clearly represent a blending of cultures. At present, community interpretation is under-developed and presents the greatest opportunity for enhanced interpretive experiences. In communities where there are dining, shopping, and lodging opportunities, the heritage area can become a vehicle for local economic growth and revitalization as visitors are provided reasons to explore through interpretation and other programs. Communities without clear opportunities to benefit economically from tourism, however, are encouraged to participate, to celebrate their traditions and stories and identify ways that the heritage area can enable community enhancements.

This management plan aims to create a high-quality interpretive experience that weaves together the heritage area’s stories, communities, sites, and landscapes into a coordinated whole. Themes to guide messages and programs were established in the feasibility study that led to the National Heritage Area’s establishment, and are described in Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation. Most interpretive projects and programs will be organized and implemented by local and regional partners in accordance with their particular goals and interests. The National Heritage Area board and staff will be responsible for coordinating
the various initiatives as appropriate. National Heritage Area guidelines will help shape initiatives, and various mechanisms through which initiatives will receive support will help provide incentives for local action. Projects and initiatives will be phased in over time as resources and capabilities permit. Marketing and visitor expectations, discussed in Chapter 8, will be carefully shaped to the level and quality of the visitor experience that can be expected during each stage of the building process.

The management plan organizes the work of creating the National Heritage Area’s interpretive experience into four broad areas of action based upon resource types and the partners primarily responsible for implementation:

• **Heritage-area-wide interpretation** establishes the interpretive context, orients visitors to opportunities, and introduces themes. This will primarily be the responsibility of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area board and staff in partnership with Los Caminos Antiguos:
  - Establish a heritage area-wide presence that is apparent to visitors and residents;
  - Orient visitors to opportunities;
  - Introduce the heritage area’s four primary themes;
  - Provide physical and interpretive linkages between communities and sites;
  - Keep visitors engaged as they move through the landscape among communities and sites;
  - Fill gaps in interpretation, telling significant stories that are not told elsewhere; and
  - Encourage visitors to explore.

Possible components of a heritage-area-wide interpretive presentation are: website; a family of heritage area-wide publications; a landscape guide; a family of entrance, wayfinding, and exhibit signage; orientation exhibits; additional interpretive exhibits for Los Caminos Antiguos and the Old Spanish Trail; branch routes for LCA; and driving tours and themed itineraries.

• **Community interpretation and visitor services** combine to form the core of what this plan calls “visitor experience.” This plan proposes a system of three levels of community participation, Cornerstone Communities (Alamosa, Antonito, Fort Garland, and San Luis), Valley Communities (with visitor services), and Heritage Communities (without visitor services). This system’s purpose is to enlist communities in building up the heritage area’s visitor experience as a whole and achieving a reputation for high-quality experiences through their participation. In return, communities gain local recognition, boost residents’ pride in and appreciation for their resources and stories, and gain a new way to express community
creativity. Also in return, they can compete for heritage area assistance for their top-priority projects and gain promotion through the heritage area’s efforts to guide visitors to participating communities according to the visitors’ needs, expectations, and interests.

To participate, a community would follow heritage area guidance, first in evaluating its visitor services, and second in determining how it wishes to work on an interpretive presentation. It would document its ideas in a brief list of actions and priorities, seek the National Heritage Area’s acknowledgment of its status, and begin work on its top-priority actions. Heritage area assistance would be made available as appropriate.

Possible components of a community interpretive presentation are: community interpretive plans; introductory exhibits; outdoor interpretive exhibits; historic buildings and landscapes; outdoor art installations; interpretive publications; themed walking tours; living history presentations; festivals and events; and community arts and crafts.

- **Site interpretation** will present detailed stories appropriate to each site or museum, illustrate heritage area themes, and offer high-quality professional programs and exhibits. Existing interpretive sites range from large regionally prominent attractions offering professional interpretive programming, to small local museums run by dedicated volunteers, to self-guided sites featuring outdoor exhibits. The heritage area seeks to engage all of these sites and attractions in its interpretive presentation. Individual partnering sites will take the lead. Possible components of a site’s interpretive development are: self-assessments; introductory exhibits; interpretive enhancements; cooperative programming; interpretive workshops; technical assistance; site improvements; and collaboration with communities.

- **Natural resource interpretation** will tell the landscape story, encourage recreational use of the region’s many public trails with enhanced interpretation, and primarily be the responsibility of the heritage area’s federal and state partners. At present, interpretation of the valley’s landscape is piecemeal, undertaken very well in a few locations while non-existent at others. The landscape should play a role in the interpretation of almost any theme or subject within the valley. Interesting aspects of the natural landscape are prevalent almost anywhere and especially well-suited to presentation through driving tours.

There are many publicly accessible places within the valley and adjacent mountains where additional interpretation can be implemented, often in association with recreational opportunities. This plan proposes that an increased emphasis upon a combination of recreation and the interpretation of natural resources could be appealing to an important segment of the visiting public. Possible components of landscape interpretation are: landscape guide and exhibits; driving tours and themed itineraries; maps, trailhead exhibits, and trail guides; website and social media; and back-country guides.

**Approach to Heritage Tourism and Marketing (Chapter 8)**

Building an audience among visitors through interpretation can contribute to the economic revitalization of communities, for as they visit, they are likely to shop and dine if there are nearby opportunities. The National Heritage Area can achieve greater resources for historic preservation and support community enhancement and revitalization by recognizing heritage tourism as an economic development strategy. Being intentional about not only telling our stories but also how visitors will learn about the region’s heritage and experience it for themselves will help to build the National Heritage Area as a destination that fulfills our goals for multiple benefits.

Visitors already travel to the San Luis Valley to experience the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Fort Garland, the two scenic railroads, and Los Antiguos Caminos scenic byway. A wide variety of events draw visitors, especially to Alamosa, which has cultivated a number of well-attended events in all seasons. Visitors are also passing through Alamosa, often to stay the night because of the large amount of lodging available, to attend such events as the Monte Vista Crane Festival or to go west to other attractions beyond Wolf Creek Pass (the western entrance to the valley) in Durango and the Four Corners region.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s existing logo provides a springboard for regional dialogue about developing a full-fledged identity and brand.
Knowledgeable travelers heading south to Taos from La Veta Pass (eastern entrance) swing along the byway south to San Luis instead of the more traveled route to New Mexico through Antonito. They often stop to climb the magnificent Stations of the Cross trail to the top of the mesa overlooking the little town with its splendid views. Hunting and fishing enthusiasts visit in abundance, as well as hikers, climbers, and bikers, frequenting the two national forests.

While we have some data on visitors to the area, visitor research is part of this management plan. Great Sand Dunes has approximately 370,000 visitors annually, while Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad and the state-sponsored welcome center in Alamosa each logs about one-tenth of that number. In 2010, the top five states of origin for travel to the San Luis Valley and the Colorado Welcome Center were Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas. The center had visitors from 44 countries in 2010, with the top five countries of origin being Germany, England, Canada, France, and Switzerland.

A major marketing objective in this plan is for visitors to the park to realize that there is much more to experience in the National Heritage Area than is commonly known. In general, this is the basis of the early strategy for marketing, to reach those who already know about the heritage area or are close by (within driving distance from Albuquerque and the Front Range). Integrating the development of interpretive elements with the expansion of marketing efforts over time will be critical to ensure that the destination is well worth the drive for visitors to the heritage area. Other strategies outlined in this plan are:

- **A heritage area-wide graphic identity and messaging campaign**: A critical way to link the heritage area’s existing and new attractions and visitor services into a cohesive and unified visitor experience is a single graphic identity and message. This will help to establish an awareness of the heritage area, create a greater appreciation for the heritage area’s intrinsic resources, and encourage visitation and longer stays at sites and in communities.

  The heritage area’s efforts to create a shared identity for the region will be distinctly different from marketing efforts undertaken by such regional tourism entities as the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau. An existing logo provides a springboard for dialogue about a full-fledged identity and brand. One challenge is that the heritage area’s three counties, the San Luis Valley as a whole, various attractions within the valley, and the national park (just to name a few) already have separate identities. A key objective for a final graphic identity and messaging strategy is to allow for individual identity while minimizing the potential for visitor confusion.

- **Leveraging connections to the National Park Service and Great Sand Dunes National Park**: Federal appropriations for National Heritage Areas are awarded through the National Park Service (NPS), which has several staff entirely dedicated to heritage areas in Washington, DC. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has had a close working relationship with the NPS Heritage Partnerships Program in Lakewood, Colorado (“Denver office”) as well as with the staff at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. Not all heritage areas include a national park; the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is fortunate to have Great Sand Dunes.

  The heritage area’s connection to NPS offers opportunities to build on its credibility and good reputation. These opportunities include linking to the NPS graphic identity under NPS guidelines; locating a passport stamp for the heritage area at the park and in selected locations around the heritage area; a Junior Ranger program to engage younger visitors; and a companion Visitor Guide to the National Heritage Area distributed as part of the welcome for visitors to

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**Goal for Heritage Tourism and Marketing**

*Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism (1.1): Increase visitation through heritage development projects and events and promotion of heritage tourism and hospitality in order to stimulate heritage preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.*
Downtown Antonito includes several restaurants enjoyed by visitors and residents alike. The Dutch Mill Cafe is regionally recognized for its popular green and red chile.

the national park. Suitable for distribution to fourth graders, the Junior Ranger booklet would also begin the long process of creating a rich curriculum for students in the heritage area’s schools.

- **Encourage a welcoming culture of hospitality:** The visitor experience requires conscious cultivation, through hospitality training, visitor centers, and showing the visitors along their way through a variety of media. This includes improving visitors’ capability to gain access to information on the region through GPS, Google Earth, and other digital wayfinding tools. A “lure piece” for inviting travelers to the National Heritage Area should be designed to attract heritage travelers, who enjoy shopping and dining, through images showing local food and unique shopping opportunities, not simply museums and other visitor attractions. Rather than including extensive detail, marketing materials should include a link or toll free number to call for additional information about trip planning and gain a warm welcome.

The heritage area should work with key partners to create day and overnight tour packages and itineraries that showcase the best of the National Heritage Area. Community hospitality training for employees at key visitor services (stores, gas stations, restaurants, etc.) initiated through the Colorado Scenic Byways program should be continued and expanded upon on a regular basis.

- **Fully inform visitors:** Chapter 8 describes the variety of possibilities for informing visitors, especially through printed materials. Chapter 7 especially recommends a large heritage-area-wide map with visitor information and interpretive content. While good design and quality lend to the credibility and appeal of interpretive and marketing pieces, items designed primarily to be informational should be accurate, engaging, and easy to read as well. An inexpensive tear-off map (an 11” x 17” ledger size black-and-white map on a gummed pad) made widely available may be an attractive and helpful informational aid to visitors.

Websites and social media have become increasingly important tourism marketing and information tools, offering cost savings in printing and postage and immediate access to worldwide audiences. Current websites are available at www.sdcnha.org and through the Great Sand Dunes section of the National Park Service’s website, www.nps.gov/grsa. As the heritage area’s work expands, it will need distinct sections of the website for internal and external audiences. It is especially important that the portal for travelers be prominent and user friendly, as this audience is most likely to be experiencing it for the first time. The portal to additional information to be used by heritage area partners can be more subtle, designed for repeat visitors. Social media is quickly gaining a growing foothold across all demographics; its rapid evolution means that a long-term plan is next to impossible to develop. Diligence in partnering with others in the region to track trends and develop trusted, fun approaches is necessary.

- **Reach out to those who can help spread the word:** Public relations efforts are a valuable and cost effective marketing tool. Good public relations efforts offer the opportunity for feature coverage about the heritage area in targeted publications. The cost of securing media coverage through public relations is almost always much less than purchasing the same space as a paid ad, and a travel feature story is likely to have more credibility with travelers as an unbiased opinion than a paid advertisement.

To maximize the heritage area’s public relations opportunities, a local public awareness campaign is a first step, to make residents more aware of the heritage area and encourage existing visitors to stay longer or plan return trips. This could include speaking engagements with local civic groups, taking opportunities to have a booth or table at events, and periodically showcasing the heritage area in local newspapers and on local radio stations such as KRZA and KGIW. A press kit that includes templates for news releases, a standard news release with general information about the heritage area, a digital image library, and a media contact list will ensure that the
heritage area is prepared to respond to last-minute press opportunities.

- **Support festivals and events:** Festivals and events are an important component to represent the heritage area’s living culture, and offer opportunities to provide a richer visitor experience for shorter periods and show communities in the heritage area in the best possible light. A calendar of events should be maintained and promoted by the heritage area. While events can be an extremely effective strategy to showcase a community or site, they can also be time-consuming for volunteers and staff. Some festivals used to be offered but were dropped due to volunteer burnout. The heritage area should work to identify and help alleviate challenges facing festivals and events that could help to support the heritage area experience, and to ensure that events complement, rather than compete with other events in the region.

**Approach to Community Revitalization (Chapter 9)**

Community revitalization can result from successes in heritage tourism, interpretation, celebration of cultural heritage, protection of natural resources, and historic preservation – activities described in preceding chapters. If we are successful in those activities, and if our communities are alert to opportunities thus presented, they can use those activities and opportunities to achieve a new level of prosperity.

**Goals for Community Revitalization**

**Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism (1.1):** Increase visitation through heritage development projects and events and promotion of heritage tourism and hospitality in order to stimulate heritage preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.

**Business Development (1.3):** Foster business retention, expansion, and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships, especially in the context of enhancing towns and agriculture as critical contributors to regional economic health.

The heritage area’s role in community revitalization is to be “aggressively supportive.” We plan a patient, long-term presence, to “be there” advocating for smart investment in planning and projects that will make a difference in a wholly new way. This is economic development that aims to capitalize on the region’s singular heritage and qualities in order to attract customers, instead of simply manufacturing or growing products to send to customers far away. A heritage area cannot change the local economic dynamic alone – communities need basics in terms of economic development, job training, business growth, and public investment in infrastructure, schools, and other community needs. But we can shine a light on new and less well-understood opportunities. Every dollar we invest in endeavors that promote heritage tourism are dollars that will also benefit our residents and our quality of life – this is an investment that supports communities and promotes sustainability.

We can provide encouragement, ideas, assistance, standards, promotion, and support for our partners’ many endeavors. All other things being equal, faced with choices among projects to support, a basic approach is to select projects that offer opportunities for stimulating community revitalization and enhancement no matter what other goals they also achieve.

Strategies for community revitalization include:

- **Establish a community revitalization program through which communities are encouraged to develop revitalization plans customized to their interests and capabilities:** The goal of the community revitalization program is to support local community interests and initiatives, strengthen community capabilities, and enhance quality of life for residents. Communities are encouraged to use heritage area strategies and programs to craft their own,
individualized plans. The National Heritage Area can provide support and technical assistance in developing and implementing the community revitalization plans.

- **Encourage communities to use community interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their community revitalization plans:** The heritage area envisions that heritage tourism could provide a significant economic boost to local communities and be a foundation for community revitalization and enhancement. Assisting communities in becoming ‘visitor ready’ and in providing a high-quality visitor experience as a basis for community revitalization is a key strategy of the management plan.

- **Establish a quality-assurance program recognizing the efforts of participating visitor service providers and interpretive sites:** Participants in this program would apply for the ability to display a heritage area emblem in their signage and marketing materials, and would participate in special heritage-area-wide promotions and marketing. They would become on-the-ground “ambassadors” for the heritage area.

In general, public tourism marketing programs work to encourage visitors to get to the general region or place they are marketing. Once visitors arrive, they and the visitor service providers are more or less on their own to connect. Basic listings may be available on a website or in a visitor guide, but the providers must undertake their own advertising. The heritage area’s program would be a way for providers to gain additional marketing exposure in a targeted fashion that visitors especially appreciate. Visitors will be more likely to venture off the beaten track to find places where they are assured of an excellent experience. The special relationship established between the heritage area and participating businesses and sites would also yield information that would strengthen our ability to perceive and meet business needs in serving visitors.

To create the program, we will work with potential candidates and other community advisors to establish criteria, guidelines, and benefits for participation. Programs to support participants could be such things as a “best of” event, an awards program, or an annual cook-off. The hospitality program described in Chapter 8 will be especially important in providing training for participants so they can readily achieve standards, and may be the first activity of a phased effort to put this program in place. Participants might be asked to develop interpretation of their business’s heritage, or the family heritage that inspired the business, or to develop cooperative relationships with local providers of products to emphasize the cultural connections of the business to the heritage area.

- **Create a San Luis Valley/Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brand for local products representative of local character and culture:** This idea flows from the recognition program described immediately above, and is a
longer term effort to be carried out in collaboration with regional organizations. The concept is to make potential buyers aware of the quality and character of the region’s products, including their place of origin. Cooperative advertising would be a large benefit for affiliated products. The region’s arts and crafts and locally grown and processed local foods are especially well suited to this cooperative advertising proposition. An extra benefit for the heritage area is that each product acts as an ambassador to buyers, who learn a bit about the distinct nature of the region with every purchase they make.

**Encourage local entrepreneurs:** In accordance with the strategies above, businesses reflecting local culture are a particular interest of the heritage area and include purveyors of the region’s arts and crafts and locally grown and processed local foods. Businesses providing visitor services are also important, especially but not limited to those offering one-of-a-kind opportunities for visitors, such as outfitters, bed-and-breakfast lodging, or farms offering “agritourism” experiences. There are such businesses in the region, but we need more – which is a chicken-and-egg problem, since a key trigger for investment in such businesses is the assurance that there will be enough of a market from visitors as well as residents. We need to encourage “clusters” of such businesses in order to provide enough of a critical mass that visitors will be reassured that there is the variety they crave. And what better setting for such businesses than our historic commercial areas?

The management plan is intended for implementation over the next 10 to 15 years. To oversee the programs, relationships, funding, personnel, etc., needed for implementing the many and widely varied strategies identified here, the heritage area needs a management entity “built” for the long term.

The “management entity” designated in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s federal legislation is the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, a nonprofit organization empowered under the legislation to accept federal funds and maintain a relationship with the Secretary of the Interior (typically carried out through the National Park Service). The organization includes multiple representatives from each county with one “at large” member from anywhere in the San Luis Valley; the superintendent of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (or a...
Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Management Plan
A Vision for the Heritage Area

Goals for Management and Implementation

Community Awareness (2-9): Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

Organization & Management (3-10): Strengthen the organization’s capacity to achieve its mission through a strong and diverse board of directors, resourceful collaboration and alliances, regular measurement of progress in implementing the management plan, financial stability and expanded funding, and sufficient staffing.

Communications (3-11): Establish open and consistent communication with partnering organizations, governmental representatives, and the public; build recognition for the National Heritage Area and those involved in its progress.

Partner Development (3-13): Stand behind partners; assist and lend credibility to their endeavors. Emphasize networking, skill-sharing, coalitions, joint ventures, and other working relationships among partners as the primary means of building the heritage area and accomplishing its goals in a mutually beneficial way.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors embraces the following principles for heritage area management:

• Meaningful partner and community engagement;
• Continually telling the story and promoting the vision;
• Responsiveness to local needs and priorities;
• An open, inclusive, collaborative, and flexible approach to operations; and
• A willingness to try new approaches and a commitment to implementing what is learned in the process of experimenting and growing.

The approach to management described in this chapter involves five critical areas of focus:

• Partnerships: The Board of Directors is the organization responsible for communicating the vision for the heritage area. Partners, however, help to carry out this plan. Chapter 10 rounds out the descriptions of partnership approaches in the preceding “mission” chapters (4 through 9) by describing ways for coordinating various activities and entities. A key feature is “partnership development,” that is, deploying the resources of the National Heritage Area in ways that reinforce the capacity of partners to implement this plan. Insights and leadership from participants running local programs will be important – and participants must strengthen their own leadership and contribute to local programs.

• Organization and decision making: The structure of partnerships shapes the organization of the Board of Directors – the “management entity” – and its committees and staff. The objective is to stimulate as much interaction among partners within the Board of Directors’ own structure as possible.

• Visibility: The National Heritage Area must come alive in the minds of all who participate in its development – programs that stimulate communication among partners and enable the public to access more information from the National Heritage Area are critical. The National Heritage Area needs a large and appreciative audience, built through more visibility and marketing, for its interpretive and heritage tourism programs.

• Funding: Raising the necessary resources to support the programs that will implement this entire plan is critical. “Resources” are defined broadly to include in-kind and volunteer services and donations, and relationship-building through “resource development” is considered the basic activity that supports the raising of funds.

• Evaluation: The Board of Directors will measure and evaluate its work and that of National Heritage Area partners in order to understand progress in implementing this plan and how National Heritage Area funds support the public interest. It must organize adjustments as needed in priorities and work plans.
We ascended a high hill which lay south of our camp, from whence we had a view of all the prairie and rivers to the north of us. It was at the same time one of the most beautiful and sublime inland prospects ever presented to the eyes of man....

The main river, bursting out of the western mountains and meeting from the northeast a large branch which divides the chain of mountains, proceeds down the prairie, making many large and beautiful islands, one of which I judged contains 100,000 acres of land, all meadow ground, covered with innumerable herds of deer....

The great and lofty mountains, covered with eternal snows, seemed to surround the luxuriant vale, crowned with perennial flowers, like a terrestrial paradise, shut off from the view of man.

- Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike, 1807 (quoted in Simmons, 4)

**INTRODUCTION**

At the time that Lieutenant Pike first laid eyes on the San Luis Valley in 1807, the region was inhabited by the Ute people, a nomadic Native American tribe that called themselves the Nuche, or “The People.” Then claimed by Spain as the northern reaches of Nueva España, the valley also attracted Spanish traders, hunters, and explorers, as well as other Native American tribes. While the Mexican land grants that were to give title to lands within the southern portion of the valley were still several decades away, the beginning of the 19th century marks a significant turning point in the evolution of the San Luis Valley as various cultures began to converge in this region and eventually settle this rugged landscape.

The San Luis Valley has a unique character that is a product of both its geology and its diverse peoples. Bordering on three sides by mountain ranges, the valley contains bountiful water, abundant timber, dramatic views, and a diverse array of ecosystems that support a wide variety of plant and animal habitats. Together these resources,
along with the real or imagined opportunities associated with Hispano and Anglo-American migration, beckoned hundreds of families from both Mexico and the eastern United States who were willing to risk everything for the promise of a new beginning. This chapter provides an overview of the resources found within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to show how they have converged to create a place of national significance worthy of both preservation and interpretation.

**Physiography**

Physiographic regions are broad-scale subdivisions based on terrain texture, rock type, and geologic structure and history. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage area is located within the southern portion of the San Luis Valley, which lies within the Southern Rocky Mountains physiographic province of the United States. The Southern Rockies extend from southeastern Wyoming to northern New Mexico. The San Luis Valley is one of six intermountain basins found within the Southern Rockies and the largest within Colorado. Ranging in elevation from 8,000 feet on the north end to 7,500 feet at its lowest point near Alamosa, the San Luis Valley as a whole is approximately 150 miles long and 50 miles wide at its maximum width. Bordered on three sides by mountains, the valley is open on the south side along its border with New Mexico where it merges into the Taos Plateau (Simmons, 4).

The eastern side of the valley is bordered by the majestic Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range, which rises abruptly from the valley floor to more than 14,000 feet. Blanca Peak, or Mount Blanca, which is the highest mountain in the range, reaches 14,345 feet. It is the fifth highest mountain in Colorado, and the eighth highest in the contiguous United States. The main Sangre de Cristo range is separated from a southern branch, the Culebra Mountains, by Sangre de Cristo Creek and La Veta Pass. It is this Culebra Range which defines the southeastern border of the heritage area.

The San Juan Mountain Range, and more specifically the La Garita Mountains and the Cochetopa Hills, borders the valley on the western side. The two mountain ranges join together at Poncha Pass to form the northern boundary of the San Luis Valley. In total, the valley encompasses approximately 8,000 square miles and has an average elevation of 7,500 feet above sea level.

In 1939, J.E. Upson published a widely accepted model that divides the San Luis Valley into five physiographic sub-regions. These include the Alamosa Basin, the Costilla Plains, the San Pedro Mesa, the Taos Plateau, and the Culebra Re-entrant (Upson, 113-122); see Figure 2-1. These features are described in more detail below.
Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Management Plan
The Natural Landscape

Geology
The underlying geology of the San Luis Valley and associated mountain ranges provides both the literal and figurative foundation for understanding the landscape as we see it today. This history is a complex and fascinating one involving tectonic events, mountain uplifts, volcanism, glaciers, and erosion. The Sangre de Cristo and the San Juan mountain ranges illustrate two different types of geologic activity. Whereas the formation of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains was primarily influenced by faulting and lifting, the San Juan Mountains were mostly formed from volcanic activity. The resulting landscape and geologic formations narrate not only the physical history of the valley, but also tell the story of various cultures that made use of the resources it left behind; see Figure 2-2.

The modern geologic history of the valley dates back to 65 million years ago when the great inland seas disappeared from the Rocky Mountains, leaving behind sedimentary rock (shale, limestone, sandstone, and siltstone) formed from marine deposits several hundred to several thousand feet thick in some places. A period of intense tectonic activity, known as the Laramide Orogeny, followed and produced mountain uplifts and corresponding basins from Montana to northern Mexico along the entire Rocky Mountain chain (Benedict, 105).

In southern Colorado, the Laramide uplift rose vertically as narrow, mostly north-south anticlines (upfolds) and faults, which elevated the once flat-lying layers of sedimentary rock like rippled blankets. This action spawned the Sangre de Cristo Range. The synclines (downfolds) formed the valleys and were rapidly filled with sediments eroding from the rising folds (Benedict, 105).

The Laramide uplift was followed by violent volcanic eruptions that occurred repeatedly throughout the Southern Rockies between 40 and 25 million years ago. Widely...
scattered volcanoes spewed lava and ash over hundreds of miles, with volcanic centers eventually coalescing to form a giant volcanic field that covered large portions of the southern and central Southern Rockies. The San Luis Valley is part of the Oligocene volcanic field, which covered all of south-central Colorado and adjacent New Mexico (Benedict, 117).

This volcanic activity brought to the surface an abundance of mineral-rich solutions from magma sources deep within the earth. This action resulted in the formation of the Colorado Mineral Belt, a narrow band of rocks containing rich deposits of gold, silver, and other precious metals stretching from Boulder southwest to Durango. While the San Luis Valley lies largely east of the core Mineral Belt, portions of Conejos County and the San Luis Mountains contain significant ore deposits. Platoro in Conejos County, for instance, was established in the 1870s as a mining camp when gold and silver were discovered around the nearby headwaters of the Conejos River. The community derived its name from the Spanish words for silver and gold (plata and oro).

Around 26 million years ago another uplift, known as the Miocene-Pliocene Uplift, triggered widespread faulting (shearing). The most important feature to form during this period, as it pertains to the formation of the San Luis Valley, was the Rio Grande Rift, where edges of the earth’s crust pulled away from each other along fault lines that ran through the valley. The San Luis Valley represents the deepest and broadest portion of the Rio Grande Rift, which extends from central Colorado southward to Chihuahua, Mexico.

Occurring simultaneously with the rift was another intense period of volcanic activity, which spawned the formation of several of the major landforms that now define the valley: the San Juan Mountains, the San Luis Hills, the Taos Plateau, and the San Pedro Mesa. These volcanoes produced lavas with a high proportion of quartz and feldspar, known as andesite, which underlies much of the Rio Grande National Forest in western Conejos County. Along the eastern side of the range between Capulin and Fox Creek, the mountains here are composed primarily of basalt (formed by lava) and ash-flow tuff (formed by ash), whereas the western edge of the county has a higher abundance of andesite.

The San Luis Hills and the San Pedro Mesa rise conspicuously 500 to 1,000 feet above the valley floor. The San Luis Hills actually comprise a chain of hills arcing northeast-southwest. They include the Brownie Hills, Fairy Hills, Piñon Hills, and South Piñon Hills. Flat Top rises the highest at 9,211 feet. The San Pedro Mesa, a separate geologic feature, extends north-south for about 15 miles east of San Luis from the Rio Costilla to the Rio Culebra. It rises to more than 8,800 feet and forms a prominent table-land, particularly when viewed from the west.

Basalt flows also formed the Taos Plateau in northern New Mexico, which is found south of the San Luis Hills and west of the Rio Grande. The Taos Plateau generally marks the southern boundary of the heritage area and extends for approximately 60 miles southward.

In areas along the eastern side of the valley, lava intrusions traveled upward along fault lines. For instance, the core of highest peak within the Sangre de Cristo range, Blanca Peak, is composed of gabbro — another form of volcanic rock. Its properties are different from basalt as it cooled below the earth’s surface rather than above it.

This additional volcanic activity also caused gold deposits to be emplaced along the fault lines, forming linear belts of
precious metals that run the entire length of Costilla County, from the Battle Mountain Gold Mine just northeast of San Luis to the Independent Gold Mine in Saguache County. Some linear belts of gold also occur in Conejos County although they have not been developed (Shapins, 17).

Turquoise, which is produced by heating of the copper minerals in basalt, is found in several areas throughout the region. A historic turquoise mine exists near Manassa in Conejos County, which was known historically as the Lickskillet Turquoise Mine. On the west side of the valley, these faults have deposited belts of onyx, which were utilized in the Lime Kiln Creek area for the production of quick lime (Shapins, 17). Other types of minerals, including opal and agate, are formed from volcanic ash whose silica has been dissolved by water. One of the patterns in the agate found within the San Luis Valley (just northwest of the heritage area) is so distinctive that it is called Del Norte agate, named for the town of Del Norte in Rio Grande County (Shapins, 17).

Between the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range and San Pedro Mesa lies the Culebra Re-entrant. The Culebra Re-entrant, which occupies the curve of the mountain range east of San Luis between Blanca Peak and the New Mexico border, is defined by the gentler rise of the valley floor and the long spurs forested with piñon and juniper that merge into the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo range. Underlain by siltstone, this geologic feature is about 40 miles long (Upson, 199-120).

Between the San Pedro Mesa and the San Luis Hills lies the Costilla Plains. This nearly level and featureless area extends southward from Blanca Peak through the border with New Mexico and continues southward to Taos. It is primarily underlain by gravel (Upson, 119).

The Alamosa Basin occupies the northern and west-central parts of the San Luis Valley north of the San Luis Hills. A closed basin, it slopes gently toward the east from the Rio Grande’s alluvial fan. Recent research hypothesizes that about 3 to 3.5 million years ago, this basin was filled by an enormous high-altitude lake. Named Lake Alamosa, it is believed to have been one of the largest high-altitude lakes in North America, persisting for about 3 million years. During this time it expanded and contracted, filling the valley with sediment until about 440,000 years ago when it is believed to have spilled out over the San Luis Hills, cut a deep gorge, flowed into the Rio Grande, and eventually receded due to climate change (Machette, 157).

During the time that Lake Alamosa was in existence approximately 2 million years ago, the Ice Age caused extreme climatic fluctuations that resulted in the growth and retreat of enormous ice sheets and valley glaciers. In the Southern Rockies region, alpine glaciers formed in all major ranges, reaching as far south as south-central New Mexico (Benedict, 131). As glaciers moved down the mountains they stopped at just about the valley floor, leaving behind end-moraines such as the one seen at Zapata Falls. When the glaciers melted, they released large volumes of muddy water and a thick layer of mud formed at the bottom of the valley floor. Gravel and sand deposits from the surrounding mountain streams also flowed into the valley and settled in deposits that are estimated to be 4,000 to 7,000 feet thick in some places (Simmons, 6). This layering of eroded sediments (clay, silt, sand, and gravel) is what provides the...
The enormous sand dunes of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve are believed to be derived from the sand deposits left over from Lake Alamosa. This sand blows with the predominant southwest winds toward a low curve in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains where it accumulates in a natural pocket. The winds blow from the valley floor toward the mountains, but during storms the winds blow back toward the valley. These opposing wind directions cause the dunes to grow vertically (NPS, Great Sand Dunes).

Remnants of smaller lakes that persisted after Lake Alamosa receded are still found today, in the form of sabkha wetlands. The sabkha forms where sand is seasonally saturated by rising groundwater. When the water evaporates away in late summer, minerals similar to baking soda cement sand grains together into a hard, white crust. Areas of sabkha can be found throughout western portions of the sand sheet, wherever the water table meets the surface (NPS, Great Sand Dunes). Further discussion of these unique ecosystems is found later in this chapter.

**CLIMATE**

The climate of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area varies widely, depending on elevation. The San Luis Valley floor has a mean annual precipitation of just 7.5 inches (Emery, 1). Much higher precipitation (with mean annual precipitation over 40 inches) is found in the highest mountain ranges. More than 67 percent of the annual precipitation occurs as scattered showers in spring and thunderstorms in summer. August is the wettest month with 50 percent of the total summer precipitation (Forman, 3).

The average annual temperature is about 58 degrees Fahrenheit; summers and autumns are usually temperate. The average summer temperatures reach a high of 82 in July with average lows reaching the low 40s. Average winter temperatures dip below zero in December and January with average highs reaching into the low 30s.

**HYDROLOGY**

While the San Luis Valley meets the definition of a true desert (receiving less than 10 inches of rainfall per year), the heritage area has abundant water resources. Surface runoff from the surrounding mountains soaks into alluvial fans and feeds two major underground aquifers. These aquifers give rise to many ephemeral lakes, wetlands, springs, and artesian wells, and support considerable irrigation in the valley; see Figure 2-3. It is this rich and diverse water system that attracted the wildlife and created the ecosystem that supported Native American hunters and gatherers for thousands of years, as well as the Hispano and American hunters, trappers, ranchers, and farmers who followed. This section explores the diverse and complex hydrologic system of the San Luis Valley as well as the economic and political demands that influence its distribution and consumption.

**The Rio Grande**

It is not possible to discuss the Rio Grande or any of its tributaries without recognizing the complex interconnectivity of the entire hydrologic system that is the Rio Grande Basin. This includes the mountain streams and underground aquifers discussed above, as well as the underlying alluvial deposits of sand and clay that lie under the valley floor. Yet the Rio Grande itself is the most well-known water feature within the heritage area, for it is the longest, widest, most visible, and continuous water body within the San Luis Valley.

The Colorado portion of the Rio Grande Basin (or watershed) encompasses approximately 7,500 square miles. Originating in the San Juan Mountains just to the northwest of the heritage area, the Rio Grande flows through the center of the San Luis Valley on its way to New Mexico before passing along the southern border of Texas to separate the United States from Mexico. In total, the river flows approximately 1,200 miles before reaching the Gulf of Mexico. Within the heritage area, the Rio Grande flows through the City of Alamosa. South of Alamosa County, it forms the boundary between Conejos and Costilla Counties.
Figure 2-3. Hydrology of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as part of the larger Rio Grande Basin.
Mountain Streams

Most of the water entering the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Area originates from rainfall that channels into mountain streams high above the valley floor. In the southern portion of the San Luis Valley these streams merge into rivers and creeks that serve as tributaries to the Rio Grande. Among these are Rock Creek, Alamosa River, La Jara Creek, Conejos River, and San Antonio River from the west; and Trinchera Creek, Culebra Creek, and Costilla Creek from the east. North of Alamosa, no mountain streams reach the Rio Grande because surface waters disappear into the gravel and sands contained within the valley floor. Among others, these include Saguache Creek, Medano Creek, Zapata Creek, and San Luis Creek, the latter of which often disappears and reappears before reaching its destination at the San Luis Lakes.

Valley Lakes and Wetlands

The San Luis Lakes are located at the lowest elevation within the Alamosa Basin. They are perennial, meaning that they do not dry up, because they are fed by seepage from the underlying water table as well as by surface flow. The San Luis Lakes are primarily two separate self-contained water bodies: San Luis Lake and Head Lake. Several other smaller lakes, such as Bachelor Lake, Cotton Lake, Twin Lakes, and Dollar Lake, which are fed by feeder streams and flowing artisan wells, surround these larger water bodies.

Other smaller lakes and wetlands are found throughout the heritage area, but most are found within the Alamosa Basin north of the San Luis Hills. The largest cluster, named Dry Lakes, is found within the Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area, and within the floodplain areas of the Rio Grande to the northwest and southeast of the City of Alamosa in the form of oxbow lakes and marshes resulting from migration of the river bed. These lakes and wetlands are also associated with other major river drainages such as Sangre de Cristo and Trinchera creeks and smaller tributaries of these stream systems (Shapins, 21).

Clusters of other lakes and wetlands are found within the Baca National Wildlife Refuge in Saguache County and the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge in Rio Grande County. In total, the San Luis Valley contains more than 230,000 acres of wetlands, the most extensive system in the Southern Rocky Mountains (Shapins, 21).
Within the heritage area, a mixture of wetland community types, such as riparian wetlands, perennial and ephemeral ponds, upland shrublands, and playa wetlands provide breeding and migration habitat for thousands of birds. More about the ecological value of these systems is discussed later in this chapter.

**Aquifers and Artesian Wells**

When the mountain streams sink into the porous floor of the San Luis Valley, seepage does not continue downward unimpeded. Rather, it is impounded by a relatively impermeable layer of clay that divides the upper unconfined aquifer from the lower confined aquifer. The unconfined aquifer sits on top of this impermeable layer and essentially forms the water table, which resides within the sandy alluvium and gravel subsurface of the Alamosa Basin, refer to Figure 2-2. The depth of the confining clay layer varies from about 100 feet in the northern part of the Rio Grande Basin to about 40 feet in the southern part (Topper, 7.1, 2). There is nothing between it and the surface of the valley floor to prevent it from appearing as surface water in low-lying areas, such as within lakes and creek beds. Shallow unconfined groundwater occurs almost everywhere in the valley and extends 50 to 200 feet beneath the land surface. The depth to water in about 50 percent of the valley is less than 12 feet (Emery, 130).

The confined aquifer (also known as an artesian aquifer) sits both above and below impermeable clay layers. It is recharged in areas where the confining layers are tilted vertically due to geologic lifting and faulting; see Figure 2-4. Because the groundwater is confined under pressure that is greater than atmospheric pressure, the water rises naturally (without pumping) through natural fissures in the rock, or in areas where wells are drilled. Where it reaches the surface, it becomes a flowing artesian well or spring. The confined aquifer is both deeper and larger than the unconfined aquifer. It extends from 50 to 30,000 feet deep and can yield up to 4,000 gallons per minute (Emery, 131).

As of 2001, water well permit records indicated that nearly 10,000 wells had been drilled in the San Luis Valley, 90 percent of which are used for irrigation of commercial crops. Groundwater is also used for public water supply in most of the municipalities within the San Luis Valley. As of 2000, there were 76 permitted municipal wells in the valley, with a total permitted pumping rate of 32,552 GPM (Topper, 1.1, 4).

**Irrigation Systems**

The agricultural fields of the San Luis Valley are irrigated in two ways: gravity-flow surface ditches, also known as acequias, and mechanized circle pivot irrigation. Acequias
were the historic means of irrigation. The first acequia was the San Luis People’s Ditch, which was dug in 1851. Being the oldest in the valley, the People’s Ditch holds the first adjudicated water rights in Colorado. Currently it serves 16 parciantes (affiliated water users) and irrigates approximately 2,100 acres of hay and other row crops. A majority of parciantes are descendants of the original founders of the acequia (San Luis Valley Heritage).

Within the heritage area, there are approximately 130 named gravity-flow irrigation ditches comprising approximately 1,300 miles of irrigation channel. While most of these divert water from rivers and streams, others channel water directly from flowing artesian wells and springs (refer to Figure 2-3 for a map showing irrigation ditches and artesian wells and springs).

The longest and most complex irrigation system in the San Luis Valley is the Rio Grande Canal, which began construction in 1881. While most of its 210 miles of canals and laterals provide water to Rio Grande and Saguache counties, many miles of this system also irrigate western Alamosa County. Completed in 1884, the canal’s main channel is 60 feet wide at the bottom, 90 feet wide at the top, five feet deep at the sides, and six feet deep in the middle. Today, 31 prior appropriations take 1,699 cubic feet per second of water from the canal. In an average year, 30 percent of the Rio Grande’s water is diverted into this canal system (Baumann).

Mechanized center pivot irrigation, which was introduced to the valley in the 1950s, began to tap the tremendous amount of water available in the confined aquifers. While the aquifers had been tapped as early as the late 1800s through drilled artesian wells to provide surface flow to ditches, the center pivot irrigation system provided a much more efficient method of distributing the water. This system is based on a well being in the center of a field and an irrigation pipe mounted on wheels gradually moving around the well. This arrangement forms circular field patterns. Most of the center pivot systems are found in the northwest portion of the valley, mainly in Saguache, Rio Grande, and Alamosa counties. These counties were organized under the Public Land Survey system with the basic land parcel being the quarter section, 160 acres. Since the initial center pivot systems were designed chiefly for quarter section land parcels on the Great Plains, it was relatively easy to apply the technology to similar areas under the Public Land Survey system. Figure 2-5, an aerial photo of the region, illustrates the concentration of center pivot irrigation fields in the northwestern portion of the heritage area.

**Water Consumption**

Excessive use of water in the Rio Grande Basin for irrigation and surface water has led to many economic and environmental challenges. The principal source of water for irrigation in the San Luis Valley between 1880 and 1950 was surface water. A large network of canals was built in 1880-90 to irrigate lands in the eastern and central parts of the closed basin, including those fed by artesian wells and springs (Emery, 131). The first drilled artesian well in the valley occurred in 1887 and within 10 years, more than 3,000 wells existed (Baumann). By 1915 most of the area around Mosca and Hooper became waterlogged because of this irrigation. Drainage systems constructed between 1911 and 1921 to reclaim waterlogged lands alleviated some of the problems but created waterlogging in areas downslope (Emery, 131).

Waterlogging causes soils to become alkaline (pH higher than 8.5), and groundwater has become highly mineralized from concentration of salts. Where salts are allowed to build up, the fertility of the soils is decreased. Excess water must be used on the fields to break up the salt and carry it back below the ground level. Pumping large volumes of water over long periods of time also uses a tremendous amount of energy. Since energy prices fluctuate, a farmer may find it difficult to judge energy costs, which is a major factor in the overall production of a crop (Baumann).

By the 1880s water conflicts were occurring and the need arose to adjudicate water rights. In 1888, a General Adjudication of water rights occurred with supplements being added over the years. In addition to these adjudications, a severe drought hit the valley and other areas in 1893. This resulted in bank failures, farmers leaving the valley, the disappearance of some small communities, and the Rio Grande drying up along the Texas-Mexico border (Baumann).

Eventually, the Rio Grande Compact was signed in 1938 by Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, to equitably apportion the waters of the Rio Grande Basin. Because too much water was being taken from the Rio Grande by the valley for agricultural development and not enough was being sent downstream, Colorado had to find a means to transfer more water downstream to New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico. Initially envisioned in the 1930s, the Closed Basin Project did not get started until the 1980s. Under this project, 170 wells now tap water from the unconfined aquifer and pump 100,000 acre-feet of water per year into an aqueduct that transfers the water to the Rio Grande for use downstream (Baumann).

Historically, depth to water in the unconfined aquifer had been less than 12 feet below ground surface. However,
Figure 2-6. Principal Land Cover within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agriculture Statistic Service Center; http://datagateway.nrcs.usda.gov.
extensive irrigation in the valley using groundwater wells has resulted in depletion of the aquifer. In the period 1969 to 1980 water level declines of up to 40 feet were documented in the unconfined aquifer. Since 1976, Colorado’s Water Division engineer estimates that the unconfined aquifer has lost 1 million acre-feet of storage. (Topper, 7.1, 4).

Depletion of groundwater resources in the valley spurred the Colorado legislature to adopt legislation requiring the State Engineer to promulgate new rules on future appropriations from the deeper, artesian confined aquifer. These appropriations now require an augmentation plan. More about water right legal issues is discussed in Chapter 3.

SOILS AND LAND USE

Generally speaking, based on geography the soils of the heritage area can be broadly characterized as two types – those soils found on the hills, mountains, and mesas; and those comprising the alluvial fans and floodplains found on the valley floor. Dune areas, which represent a third type, are discussed in more detail in the following section.

Mountain Soils

Mountain soils range from gently sloping to very steep. These soils are deep, highly porous, and sandy and are underlain by gravely subsoils. In some cases there are rocky outcrops. The prevailing soils in the San Juan Mountains are derived mainly from weathering and erosion of volcanic rocks. Among others, these include the Seitz, Frisco, Granile, and Bendire complexes. These soils are used principally for livestock grazing and timber production. The most common native vegetation consists of western wheatgrass, blue grama, piñon and ponderosa pine, juniper, oak, and blue spruce with an understory of sideoats grama, and mountain muhly. While the foot slopes can be cultivated with irrigation, they are lechy and do not retain moisture.

In the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the parent material is primarily outwash derived from granite, gneiss, mica schist, and sedimentary rock. Common soils include the Teewinot, Leadville, Stunner, Uracca, and Lakehelen complexes, which range from deep and well drained stony and sandy loams to bedrock outcrops in the higher elevations. Common uses...
include livestock grazing, timber production, and natural pastureland, see Figure 2-6 (Land Use).

### Valley Soils
Valley soils are primarily classified as San Luis, Gunbarrel, Mosca, Hooper, Alamosa, and Travelers soil complexes. These are deep alluviums typically composed of sandy loams, loams, or clay loams underlain by gravelly subsoils that formed from igneous and metamorphic rock. Compared to the mountain soils, these are darker in color, and have a heavier texture and more compact structure.

Generally speaking, these soils are poorly drained, typically alkaline, very low in organic matter, and subject to waterlogging. In some cases, depth to water table ranges from 12 to 40 inches. These soils occur along the tributary stream bottoms and alluvial fans, and over extensive areas of the valley floor. They represent the most common soil types of the southern and western parts of the larger San Luis Valley.

These soils are well adapted to grains, alfalfa, grasses, field peas, and vegetables, including the root crops. Principal native plants associated with these soil types include saltgrass, alkali sacaton, rabbitbrush, and greasewood, as well as sedges and rushes in the wetland and riparian areas.

### Ecoregions
Containing alluvial valleys, volcanic plateaus, alpine and subalpine forested mountains, shrubland-covered hills, sand dunes, sand sheets, salt flats, wetlands, and a variety of aquatic habitats, the ecological diversity of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is enormous. Its landscape comprises 12 of Colorado’s 35 Level IV Ecological Regions, the most detailed categorization of ecological regions defined by the US Environmental Protection Agency, (see Figure 2-7). Each ecoregion represents an area that is similar in geology, physiography, vegetation, climate, soils, land use, wildlife, and hydrology; they are designed to serve as a spatial framework for the research, assessment, management, and monitoring of ecosystems and ecosystem components, especially across federal agencies, state agencies, and nongovernmental organizations that are responsible for different types of resources within the same geographical areas.

Ecoregions within the Sangre de Cristo and San Luis mountain zones are principally determined by geology and elevation. They include the Alpine Zone, Crystalline Mid-Elevation and Subalpine Forests, Sedimentary Mid-Elevation and Subalpine Forests, Volcanic Mid-Elevation and Subalpine Forests, and Foothill Shrublands (Chapmann, map and table).

**Alpine Zone**
The Alpine Zone makes up a small percentage of the heritage area. Found along the highest peaks of the Sangre de Cristo and San Luis mountain ranges, these are treeless glaciated areas with steep slopes and exposed rocky peaks that rise above the timberline at an elevation of 12,000 feet. The amount of precipitation received within this zone is the highest within the heritage area – between 35 and 70 inches per year – and its snowmelt serves as a water source to the lower elevations. Its principal land cover includes snowpack, ice, bare rock, and alpine meadows containing bistort, alpine timothy, alpine avens, alpine bluegrass, alpine clover, tufted hairgrass, and various sedges.

**Crystalline, Sedimentary and Volcanic Subalpine Forests**
The Crystalline and Sedimentary Subalpine Forests occupy most of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range within the heritage area, whereas the Volcanic Subalpine Forest occupies most of the San Luis Mountains. Distinguished by their bedrock, these are high mountain and steeply sloped, glaciated zones that range between 9,000 and 12,000 feet in elevation. Found below the Alpine Zone, they receive slightly less precipitation – between 28 and 50 inches per year (the Crystalline Subalpine Forest receiving slightly more), which persists as deep winter snowpack. Forests within these zones are dominated by Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir that are often interspersed with aspen groves, lodgepole pine, or mountain meadows, and with Douglas fir at lower elevations. The Crystalline Subalpine
The Natural Landscape

Forest understory is dominated by dwarf huckleberry and grouse whortleberry, whereas the Sedimentary and Volcanic Subalpine Forests contain more kinnickinnick, snowberry, sedges, mountain brome, and forbs. Perennial streams are also found in this zone.

**Crystalline, Sedimentary, and Volcanic Mid-Elevation Forests**

The Crystalline, Sedimentary, and Volcanic Mid-Elevation Forests are partially glaciated. The Crystalline and Sedimentary Mid-Elevation Forests occur only a small portion of the heritage area east of Garland City in Costilla County, whereas the Volcanic Mid-Elevation Forest comprises a small zone west of Fox Creek and Centro in Conejos County. These ecoregions occupy an elevation ranging between 7,000 and 9,000 feet. Their forests are characterized by low mountain ridges, slopes, and outwash fans that receive between 20 and 32 inches of precipitation per year. The Crystalline Mid-Elevation Forest vegetation consists primarily of Ponderosa pine with areas of Douglas fir, and an understory of mountain mahogany, bitterbrush, wax currant, skunkbrush, woods rose, mountain muhly, Junegrass, Arizona fescue, king spike-fescue, and various sedges.

The Sedimentary Mid-Elevation Forests contain more Gambel oak woodland, aspen forest, and two-needle piñon pine, as well as antelope bitterbrush, fringed sage, serviceberry, and snowberry. Volcanic Mid-Elevation Forests differ in that their understories contain more dwarf juniper, western wheatgrass, Oregon grape, blue grama, sideoats grama, and needlegrasses.

**Foothill Shrublands**

The Foothill Shrublands comprise a narrow zone at the foothills of both the San Luis and Sangre de Cristo mountain ranges. Mostly occupying an elevation range of 6,000 to 8,500 feet, they can extend up to 10,000 feet in small areas. This ecoregion is unglaciated and contains perennial as well as intermittent and ephemeral streams.

Receiving a mean annual precipitation of 12 to 20 inches, it consists of mostly sagebrush, as well as some areas of piñon-juniper woodland that are interspersed with mountain mahogany shrubland, Gambel oak, mountain big sagebrush, skunkbrush, serviceberry, fringed sage, and rabbitbrush, as well as such grasses as blue grama, Junegrass, western wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, Scribner needlegrass, and muttongrass.

Ecoregions within the valley area include Salt Flats, Sand Dunes and Sand Sheets, San Luis Alluvial Flats and Wetlands, and San Luis Shrublands and Hills.

**The San Luis Shrublands and Hills**

The San Luis Shrublands and Hills are found throughout much of the southern portion of the heritage area and encompass the San Luis Hills, Taos Plateau, and the lower foothills of both mountain ranges. Ranging between 7,900 to 9,100 feet in elevation, this ecoregion’s mean annual precipitation averages between 10 and 14 inches per year. The lands are primarily used for rangeland and contain shrublands, grasslands, and piñon-juniper woodlands at their highest elevations. Species include big sagebrush, rubber rabbitbrush, winterfat, western wheatgrass, green needlegrass, blue grama, and needle-and-thread grass.

**The San Luis Alluvial Flats and Wetlands**

The San Luis Alluvial Flats and Wetlands ecoregion covers extensive areas of the San Luis Valley. In Alamosa County it extends along most of its western border and as far south as Antonito in Conejos County. Another large area is found in a stretch along Route 159A extending south from Blanca to the state line, and another extending southwest from San Luis to the Rio Grande. As its name suggests, it is a relatively flat area containing wetlands, springs, and areas with a high water table. It also hosts several large perennial streams that originate in the mountains. Ranging from 7,500 to 8,000 feet in elevation, it receives only 6 to 10 inches of precipitation per year. This ecoregion generally corresponds with irrigated cropland, which has replaced most of the natural vegetation (shadscale, fourwing saltbush, and greasewood). The most common crops include potatoes, alfalfa, barley, hay, and wheat, as well as small areas of vegetables such as lettuce, spinach, and carrots.

**Salt Flats**

The Salt Flats comprise some of the lowest lying areas of the heritage area. They extend from the north boundary of the heritage area southward to the vicinity of La Sauses, making up approximately half of Alamosa County. This ecoregion receives only 6 to 8 inches of precipitation per year. Unlike the Alluvial Flats and Wetland ecoregion, however, most of these lands are not irrigated and remain in shrubland that are adapted to the alkaline soils (shadscale, fourwing saltbush, greasewood, horsebrush, spiny hopsage, rubber rabbitbrush, saltgrass, and alkali sacaton). Much of this region is used as low-density pastureland.

**Sand Dunes and Sand Sheets**

The Sand Dunes and Sand Sheets are located in and around the Great Sand Dunes National Park. This ecoregion is characterized by the dunes themselves, as well as the sandy grasslands that extend around three sides of the main dune field, also known as the sand sheet. Almost 90 percent of the sand deposit is found in the sand sheet, while only about 10 percent is found in the main dune field. The sand sheet is the primary source of sand for the Great Sand
Dunes. Small dunes form here and then migrate into the main dunefield (NPS, Great Sand Dunes).

Comprising a unique ecosystem, this area has outstanding biodiversity significance. While the dune areas are mostly devoid of vegetation, some Indian ricegrass, blowout grass, and lemon scurf pea can be found here. The sand sheet plant communities are characterized by rabbitbrush, needle-and-thread grass, and rice grass, while scurf pea, skeleton weed, and blowout grass characterize the shifting sand component. Some of the sand sheet is used as native pastureland for bison and cattle.

**Biodiversity**

Biodiversity is the degree of variation of life forms within a given ecosystem. Greater biodiversity implies greater biological and ecosystem health. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) tracks and ranks Colorado’s rare and imperiled species and habitats and provides information and expertise on these topics to promote the conservation of Colorado’s valuable biological resources and the protection of its biodiversity. As part of its mission, the CNHP also maps Elements of Occurrence (EO) and Potential Conservation Areas (PCA).

**Element Occurrences**

Elements are defined as a biodiversity unit worthy of conservation attention and action for which a Heritage Conservation Status Rank is assigned. These are typically recognized as individual species and ecological communities. An Element Occurrence (EO) is defined as a specific example of an Element at a geographic location characterized by a habitat capable of sustaining or contributing to the survival of the species, or by a landscape that supports the ecological integrity of the biological community.

The classification scheme that CNHP uses to track rare species and natural communities is a standardized ranking system that allows the CNHP and other organizations to target the most at risk species and ecosystems for inventory, protection, research, and management. Species and ecosystems are ranked on the Global (G), National (N), and State (S) levels. The basic ranks used to classify species and ecosystems are:
Figure 2-9. Potential Conservation Areas within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

1 = Critically Imperiled
2 = Imperiled
3 = Vulnerable to Extirpation
4 = Apparently Secure
5 = Demonstrably Widespread, Abundant, and Secure

Figure 2-8 shows the general locations where globally rare species and natural communities have been identified throughout the heritage area. Due to the sensitive nature of these data, actual species and natural community locations have been generalized to 7.5-minute USGS quadrangles. As can be inferred from this map, the rarest species and habitats are found in and around the Great Sand Dunes National Park, the San Luis Lakes area, the Baca NWR, the Alamosa NWR, the Monte Vista NWR, the Blanca Wetlands, the Sangre de Cristo National Forest, the Rio Grande, Sangre de Cristo Creek, Medano Creek, Alamosa River, and Conejos River.

Potential Conservation Areas

Potential Conservation Areas (PCA) are identified by the CNHP in order to delineate the best estimate of the primary area required to support the long-term survival of targeted species or natural communities, see Figure 2-9. PCAs may include a single occurrence of a rare element or a suite of rare elements or significant features. The following descriptions of the areas ranked as the largest and highest priority (B1 and B2 sites) are summarized from the Level 4 Potential Conservation Area Reports made available online by the CNHP. These and other Conservation Area Reports are available at http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/gis/pca_reports.asp#s:

Great Sand Dunes

According to the CNHP the Great Sand Dunes ecosystem is the highest priority (B1 ranked) conservation area in the San Luis Valley. Six endemic species of insects (five beetles and one robber fly) are known from this ecosystem. Although there are approximately 900 insects known from the Great Sand Dunes, experts have estimated that at least 2,000 possibly reside here. In addition to the rare and rich invertebrate assemblage, a wide variety of plants, plant communities, and vertebrates also are of biological
significance. To the north approximately 10,000 acres are dominated by grasslands of needle-and-thread grass and rice grass. Interdunal and isolated wetlands provide important habitat for unusual plant communities and rare plants. Several of these wetlands have small populations of the globally rare slender spiderflower. This system is also important habitat for the endemic mammals of the San Luis Valley, especially Ord’s kangaroo rat, silky pocket mouse, plains pocket mouse, and northern pocket gopher.

Of the 13 conservation areas ranked as having very high biodiversity significance (B2) within the heritage area, the largest (encompassing more than 10,000 acres) are described below.

**San Luis Lakes**
This large site encompasses nearly 35,000 acres adjacent to the Great Sand Dunes. It encompasses the San Luis Lakes Basin and Sand Creek, one of its primary water sources. Elevations range from approximately 7,497 feet at the bottom of San Luis Lake to 12,042 feet at the headwaters of Sand Creek. There are two natural lakes at the site that have no outlet in most years. The surrounding upland habitats are saline basins or wind-blown sand deposits with a decidedly saline character, supporting greasewood and saltgrass vegetation. This site supports 21 elements of concern: eight plant communities, three plant species, two mammal subspecies, seven birds, and one invertebrate species. Five significant wetland communities are also found at this site. The majority of this PCA is in public ownership and within the boundaries of the San Luis State Park and the Great Sand Dune National Park and Preserve. Most of the remainder of this PCA is owned by the Nature Conservancy as the Medano-Zapata Ranch.

**Blanca Wetlands**
The Blanca Wetlands site encompasses more than 15,400 acres. Lying just to the south of the Great Sand Dunes, the site is characterized by a mosaic of low dunes and depressions, with little topographic relief. Most of the area is federally managed by the Bureau of Land Management as the Blanca NWR, where the agency employs intensive management for waterfowl, water bird, and shorebird habitat. The topographic depressions are seasonally flooded by canal or artesian water to produce a diverse mosaic of wetland habitats. The artesian wells are generally located at the slightly higher elevations, and water is allowed to flow by gravity through the reserve, supporting a series of wetland types. Ponds, marshes, subsaline wetlands, and hypersaline playas are produced sequentially from a given water source as flow is lost to evaporation and salts accumulate. With the exception of rinsed pond or marsh soils near the artesian wells, wetland soils are highly alkaline (pH 8.5 to 10.5) and poor in organic matter.

The Blanca Wetlands site supports a variety of wetland vegetation types and contains excellent occurrences of the globally imperiled slender spiderflower, saltmarsh bulrush, and red glasswort. The Western snowy plover, white-faced ibis, and black-crowned night heron, all state-listed rare birds, nest at the site.
Spring Creek at Greenie Mountain

This site contains a diverse assemblage of open water, emergent marsh, saline wet meadows, peatland, riparian communities, and some uplands. Historically, much of the site received flow from Spring Creek and possibly from groundwater discharge. The natural hydrology has been altered due to groundwater pumping and water diversions for local irrigation and for habitat management on the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, which encompasses most of this PCA. Spring Creek has also been channelized for much of its length. Although the hydrology does not likely represent natural historic conditions, current hydrologic management supports all of the elements. For instance, seepage from canals, ditches, and ponds supplement natural groundwater discharge is supporting sedge meadows and emergent marshes, whereas open water areas within the habitat management units support floating/submergent species.

It has been speculated that much of the refuge, prior to European settlement, was dominated by greasewood, saltgrass, alkali sacaton, and rabbitbrush. There are still some very large tracts of land dominated by such species. Exact species composition varies with the degree of soil moisture and salinity. It is believed that the area where Spring Creek crosses CO Highway 15 may best represent what freshwater marshes were like in the western portion of the San Luis Valley prior to European settlement as this stretch of creek has not been channelized.

Upper Medano Creek

The Upper Medano Creek site covers about 11,500 acres and spans an elevational range from 8,700 to 12,600 feet. This site has some sand dunes at the lowest elevations, and grades through montane forests to subalpine areas at the crest of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Upper portions of the Medano Creek site lie in a glaciated basin. Medano Lake, at the upper elevations, is surrounded by subalpine wetlands in excellent condition. These wetlands include shrublands, sedge meadows, and forblands. There are excellent occurrences of the globally imperiled Smith whitlow grass and the globally imperiled subalpine riparian/wetland willow carr, a good occurrence of the globally vulnerable thinleaf alder/mesic forb riparian shrubland, an excellent occurrence of a globally secure alpine wetland, and occurrences of the globally vulnerable Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

Rio Grande at Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge

This site encompasses a segment of the Rio Grande River and its floodplain downstream of the City of Alamosa to the southern tip of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. This area was historically referred to as the “Alamosa Marshes” and documented as one of the largest wetland complexes in the San Luis Valley by the 1878 Wheeler expedition maps. Historically, the area was grazed by domestic livestock and irrigated for forage production. Following the establishment of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge in 1962, irrigation continued in many areas. The Closed Basin Canal, constructed in 1983 by the Bureau of Reclamation, bisects the Refuge and provides water to the Refuge as mitigation for wetlands impacted from the Closed Basin project. Water management (e.g., irrigation), the Rio Grande, and alluvial groundwater support numerous wetland types, such as decadent cottonwood riparian forests, emergent wetlands, semi-permanent wetlands, willow shrublands, and fresh and saline wet meadows. These wetland types are scattered throughout the floodplain and constitute a diverse oasis of wetland habitat in Colorado’s driest mountain valley.

These wetlands support a diverse array of nesting, migrating, and wintering water birds, songbirds, and raptors. Many species of water birds, shorebirds, and songbirds nest on the refuge. Many species of mammals, including elk, coyote, deer, porcupine, rabbits, beaver, muskrats, and weasels, are also found here. Bald eagles and Southwestern willow flycatchers are federally listed threatened and endangered species that are documented on the refuge, and other species of management concern, such as the American bittern, black tern, burrowing owls, ferruginous hawk, and white-faced ibis are also found in this PCA.
Chapter 3 • The Cultural Landscape

INTRODUCTION
Long before Lieutenant Zebulon Pike laid eyes on the San Luis Valley in 1807, southern Colorado had been occupied on and off for thousands of years by native peoples who used the valley’s resources for sustenance and shelter. Eventually, the abundance of wild animals attracted hunters and trappers from both the early Hispano and American cultures. The natural resources of gold, silver, opals, turquoise, and calcite-bearing onyx veins also brought miners and laborers, who were followed by ranchers and farmers attracted by the valley’s abundant and diverse water systems. The landscape of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is layered with rich and complex stories of these peoples and the resources they knew.

Prehistoric Period: Fertile Hunting Grounds
The long span of human occupation of the San Luis Valley was greatly influenced by its geology, topography, and climate. Toward the end of the last Ice Age, while large portions of the continent were still covered by ice, a corridor of land along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains enabled nomadic hunters from the north to enter the plains of what are now Colorado, northeastern New Mexico, and western Texas. Early Folsom Man, as they were called, was followed by waves of other prehistoric cultures that ebbed and flowed into the San Luis Valley over the next 8,000 years. While some cultures are better documented than others and our collective understanding of this history evolves with new findings, there is no doubt that the region served as rich hunting grounds and encampments for various prehistoric peoples. There is no evidence, however, that any permanent settlements existed within the San Luis Valley until the mid 19th century.

Folsom Man: Paleoindian Period (10,000-5500 BC)
The Paleoindian Period is characterized by the presence of various types of points used for hunting of now extinct large game species, such as mammoths and bison. Paleoindian nomadic people, known as Folsom Man, survived by hunting these large creatures, as well as a few smaller animals that still exist today. Bones of many extinct bison have been excavated in recent years, and stone tools belonging to Folsom Man have been found in the San Luis Valley, where game was pursued until about 8000 BC (Simmons, 14; Shapins, 30). The first discovery of Folsom artifacts in the valley occurred in the vicinity of the sand dunes, and others have been found in pockets between low dunes, around the San Luis Lakes, the Dry Lakes, and elsewhere throughout northeast Alamosa.
County (Simmons, 14-15; Guthrie, 16). Important Folsom campsites in the heritage area include the Linger Folsom site, a bison kill site; the Zapata Folsom site, a temporary camp site most likely associated with a bison kill event; and Stewart’s Cattle Guard site, a short-term bison kill and processing site. Later Paleoindian cultures including Agate Basin, Dalton, Hell Gap, Eden, James Allen, and Scottsbluff visited the area until about 6000 BC (Shapins, 30).

**Upper Rio Grande People: Archaic Period (5500-500 AD)**

Somewhere around 6000 BC there was a shift in environmental conditions that caused prehistoric people to adapt to hunting smaller game and diversify their sustenance to include wild plant species, such as piñon nuts, wild grasses, and sagebrush leaves (Guthrie, 22, 34). This marks the beginning of the Archaic Period, which lasted about 5,000 years. Early Archaic remains are relatively common in the San Luis Valley, especially in close proximity to the Rio Grande (Guthrie, 22). Although not formally recognized as a discrete culture, the Upper Rio Grande people were migratory hunters and gatherers who had no pottery and appear to have raised no crops. They hunted rabbit, deer, antelope, and buffalo with points that were crudely carved from black and gray volcanic stone. Dwellings were temporary camps and shelters made of rock, the locations of which have been found on knolls and canyon rims that provided good views of game and enemy aggressors (Simmons, 15). While dating has not been definite, evidence indicates these people were moving up and down the Rio Grande for some time before the birth of Christ and left extensive artifacts, indicating larger groups and longer periods of occupancy. However, there is still no evidence to indicate a permanent type of occupancy – rather, only migrations in the more temperate weather. Bones found in excavations are those of deer, antelope, bison, and smaller animals (Wilson, 204).

**Pueblo Indian Influences: Formative Period**

The Formative Period is distinguished from the earlier prehistoric periods by the presence of agriculture or similar subsistence farming. Within the mountain region of central Colorado, however, there is little evidence to suggest that prehistoric peoples were practicing a sedentary lifestyle. Artifacts such as pottery and definitive point styles suggest that the Ancestral Puebloans (11,300 AD) from southwestern Colorado, who practiced agriculture and lived in villages, did penetrate into the San Luis Valley and Rio Grande National Forest, but most likely only for hunting or trade expeditions (Guthrie, 39; Simmons, 16).

Of the San Luis Valley, the Tewa Indians who now live in pueblos north of Santa Fe, tell legends about Sip’ophe (a sacred lake where people emerge into this world from the underworld, and where spirits of the dead return) as being a small brackish lake near the sand dunes (Simmons, 13-14). Several artifacts have been found near the sand dunes and San Luis Lakes, such as ceramics that are associated with formative Pueblo cultures along the Rio Grande, some dating to 700-1400 AD (Guthrie, 41). Pueblo Indians were also attracted to the San Luis Valley for turquoise, a material they especially prized. The Kings Mine near Manassa is believed to be the oldest known prehistoric turquoise mine in North America (Simmons, 16).

Despite this evidence of Pueblo contact and knowledge of the San Luis Valley, no evidence of permanent dwellings has been found (Wilson, 205). During this entire development period, nomadic hunters came from spring to fall, seeking the bountiful game and wildfowl. From evidence found at camp sites it is apparent that three approaches into the valley were used by the Pueblo Indians. The one traveled most often was north from Taos, along the east side of the Rio Grande into the sand dunes area.

Another route existed along the west side of the Rio Grande, extending west into the valley and continuing north. Indians from Chama and the Pajarito Plateau came in from the San Antonio area along the Rio Tucosas, the Rio San Antonio, and the Rio Vallecito. Very little pottery has been found along the last two trails. Since the horse was unknown at that time women and dogs packed the provisions. Artifacts found at the eastern sites – pottery shards, manos, metates, and tools in large amounts – indicate that families traveled together and spent some time in the area. The metate and mano were used to grind wild grass seeds picked along the way. Many varieties of wild plants were plentiful and it is known they made use of yucca, *tules* (cattails), nuts, and berries (Wilson, 205).

**Historic Period: Exploration and Settlement**

Around 1300 AD Indian tribes in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico were becoming distributed and aligned much as the Spaniards found them in the late 1500s. By at least 1400 AD and maybe as early as 1100, the Utes had entered western Colorado in search of better hunting and more easily defended territory than they had occupied in the Great Basin of Utah. When they moved eastward into Colorado, they took over most of the mountain areas as their hunting territory (Simmons, 17). Several divisions of the Utes frequented the valley:

Although Utes traveled in small family groups to hunt or to fight, they belonged to larger bands. While various members of the southern bands visited the San Luis Valley from time to time, the Capotes most often frequented the southwestern part of the Valley.
When spring came the Utes would gather for their ceremonial bear dance and social activities before moving out in small family groups again for summer living. When danger threatened from the Arapahoes, Cheyennes, Comanches, Kiowas, Sioux, or Pawnees (who also used the valley for seasonal hunting), the Ute families grouped together for defense (Wilson, 206).

“These were the conditions the Spanish found when they first entered the area between 1630 and 1640” according to one scholar, who goes on to describe the changes that resulted from the mixing of these cultures:

First encounters were peaceful and trading flourished. The Utes traded meat and hides for trade goods from the Spanish, but above all they bartered for the horse….[W]ith the added mobility provided by the horse the Utes’ hunting grounds spread over the mountains to the east where they found the buffalo in plentiful numbers. Now they had a resource that provided them with tepee covers, blankets, sinew thread, bowstrings, horn glue, skin bags, moccasins and more meat than they had ever known. No longer did they have to depend on women and dogs to carry provisions. Likewise, the horse permitted them to invade and withdraw quickly from enemy territory and they became warlike and aggressive. Another factor that brought about the change to a more warlike nature was the influx of traders and trappers and later settlers, who were encroaching on the territory the Tabeguache had known as their own for so many years (Wilson, 206).

In the 1830s, Anglo-American trading forts began to be constructed in northern and western Colorado, and the Utes’ relationship with New Mexico began to deteriorate. Indian conflict in the valley came to an end when Chief Ouray made a treaty with the United States in 1868, after which the Utes were moved to a reservation in western Colorado (Wilson, 206). More about these conflicts is discussed later in this chapter.

Spanish Exploration and Dominance (1580-1822)
In late April of 1598, Don Juan de Oñate took possession of New Mexico, claiming all the territory drained by the Rio Grande, including the San Luis Valley, for King Phillip II of Spain. During the period 1580-1594, there were several Spanish expeditions into northern New Mexico and the San Luis Valley – mostly to look for gold. The first Spanish contact with the Utes in the San Luis Valley resulted from an exploration party early in that period, sent by Oñate, in search of buffalo (Simmons, 22-23). Contact, however, was brief, and the Spaniards focused on defending their territory in New Mexico from Pueblo Indians.
It was not until 1694 that the next documented expedition occurred within the San Luis Valley. It was during that year that General Don Diego de Vargas, having defeated the Pueblo Indians and restored Spanish possession of Santa Fe, brought his expedition into the San Luis Valley, travelling up Rio Culebra and then south to Costilla Creek (Carter and Mehls, 1).

A few additional expeditions were conducted throughout the region during the mid 1700s. Governor Manuel de Portillo led an expedition into the San Luis Valley in 1761 (Carter and Mehls, 2). Don Juan Maria de Rivera set out in 1765 to search the mountains of southwest Colorado for minerals. The party entered the area by way of the Rio Chama, the route that became known as the Spanish Trail. They returned along the Gunnison, across Cochetopa Pass, and down through the San Luis Valley (Simmons, 26). A military expedition organized by Governor Juan Bautista also travelled north through the San Luis Valley in 1779 to wage a battle against the Comanche. Individual Spaniards also made trips into the San Luis Valley to trade with the Utes and to hunt deer (Carter and Mehls, 2).

Spanish exploration into southern Colorado followed two primary routes:

The San Luis Valley route was followed either along the mountains on the west side of the valley by travelers coming north from Santa Fe or along the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on the east side of the valley. The Rio Grande River Gorge dictated this division of routes. The eastern route along the Sangre de Cristo Mountains was popular, and much traffic turned east at the base of Mount Blanca and crossed the mountains via Mosca Pass. The western route followed just to the east of the San Juan Mountains and took a northeast arch toward Cochetopa Pass or, curving northeastward, followed a route over Poncha Pass through South Pass and down Ute Pass to the Plains. The second route from Santa Fe was in a northeastwardly direction toward Taos and across the Raton Mountains and then north along the Front Range (Carter and Mehls, 4).

While the Spanish presence within the San Luis Valley was certainly felt by the Utes and other indigenous tribes they encountered, they left little evidence of their adventures. While outposts and forts were located at the Sangre de Cristo Pass or in the San Luis Valley along the New Mexico border, their detailed locations are unknown and no traces of these features have been found. Explorers traveled light and left little (Carter and Mehls, 4). According to one scholar, “Though more than two hundred years had passed since Spanish acquisition of New Mexico, little had changed in the San Luis Valley. Indians still occupied it, hunting, fishing, and raiding….Despite the fact that Spaniards had lived on
the threshold of the valley for two centuries, they never assumed the strength or initiative to occupy this northern stronghold of the *indios barbaros*” (Simmons, 30). Spanish dominance ended in the region in 1821 with the Mexican Revolution, and in 1822 the Mexican government opened their borders for trade with Santa Fe (Carter and Mehls, 3).

**Trading and Trapping (1803-1880)**
While the San Luis Valley was still officially under the control of Spain, which considered trapping for trade with other nations illegal, trappers came into the region shortly after the United States purchased Louisiana from France in 1803 (Carter and Mehls, 9). Traded goods mostly consisted of beaver pelts and buffalo hides.

It was within this context that Lieutenant Zebulon Montgomery Pike led an expedition to explore the western portion of the Louisiana Territory, whose boundaries, which were understood to be the upper reaches of the Arkansas River valley, were still being contested. In January 1807 he crossed over the Sangre de Cristo range via Medano Pass and recorded his famous observations of the San Luis Valley – the first American to do so. He was arrested shortly thereafter by the Spanish at a stockade camp near Conejos, and later released (Simmons, 35-37).

After Mexico gained its independence from Spain in 1821, American trade with Santa Fe increased substantially. Much of this eastern trade came by way of the Santa Fe Trail, which linked Santa Fe with Missouri. While this trail passed far east of the San Luis Valley, a cutoff route utilized by trappers and other travelers going to Taos (the Taos Trail) cut through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and then turned south through the east side of the valley along Sangre de Cristo Creek. Trappers based in Taos had as their range the San Luis Valley, the Sangre de Cristos, and the Front Range rivers, and worked in this region from the 1820s through 1840. While temporary settlements and trading posts were likely established in the valley, no known record of these remains (Carter and Mehls, 9-10).

**Mexican Land Grants and Disputed Territory (1830-1848)**
In order to promote settlement, reward patrons of the government, and create a buffer zone to separate hostile Indians from the more populated regions of New Mexico, Spain (and later Mexico) made land grants to individuals, towns, and groups throughout its northern frontier lands. The number of grants made between the end of the 17th century to the middle of the 19th century total about 295 (Shapins, 31). The first land grants in present-day Colorado were executed in the 1830s: the Tierra Amarilla Grant and the Conejos Grant, both within the San Luis Valley (Carter and Mehls, 25). The boundaries of the Conejos grant covered most of present-day Conejos and Rio Grande counties. It was described as “extending north to La Garita Mountains,
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east to the Rio Grande, south
to San Antonio Peak, and west
to Sierra Montosa." Most of the
Tierra Amarilla Grant lies within
northern New Mexico, with only
a small portion within Colorado
(Carter and Mehls, 17).

The Conejos Grant was originally
made not to an individual but
rather to a group of 50 families
on the condition that they effect a
settlement on the grant. However,
Indian hostility prevented them
from beginning any attempts to
settle the land until 1842, when
the original grantees and their
heirs petitioned for the grant to
be revalidated. Since the original
paperwork could not be located, a
new grant, in the names of Julian
Gallegos and Antonio Martines,
was made to 84 families from Taos,
El Rio, Rio Arriba, Rio Colorado,
Abiquiu, and other villages in
northern New Mexico (Simmons,
78). This reinstatement of the
grant, however, did not abate
the Indian attacks and settlement
stalled for several more years
(Simmons, 81).

The Sangre de Cristo Grant,
located in present-day Costilla
County, was granted to Narciso
Beaubien and Stephen Luis Lee
in 1843. The Sangre de Cristo
Grant began “one Spanish league
above the mouth of Trinchera
Creek, from which point the
boundary ran straight northeast
to the summit of ‘Sierra Madre,’
or Blanca Peak. From there the
boundary followed the spine of the
Sangre de Cristos southward along
the Culebra Range to take in the
headwaters of Costilla Creek and
then ran generally northwest to
meet the Rio Grande” (Simmons,
83). No settlement, however, was
attempted until 1848.

It is within this context that the San Luis Valley became
contested territory once again. Beginning with the Texas
Revolution in 1836, the lands to the east of the Rio Grande
were claimed by the Republic of Texas when it declared its
independence from Mexico. This boundary was disputed by
Mexico, which recognized the Nueces River farther to the east as the dividing line. When the United States annexed the Republic of Texas in 1845 as the 28th state in the Union the contested territory became a trigger for the Mexican American War, which began on May 13, 1846. Lasting less than two years, the war ended on February 2, 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. This treaty provided for the Mexican cession of more than 500,000 square miles in exchange for 15 million dollars. The ceded lands included all of present-day California, Nevada, and Utah as well as most of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado (west of the Rio Grande). Mexico also relinquished all claims to Texas and recognized the lower Rio Grande as the southern boundary of the United States, placing the entire San Luis Valley firmly under the undisputed control of the United States.

**Early Hispano Settlement (1848-1900)**

As the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo promised to respect the language, religion, and property of the Mexican people within this newly acquired territory, settlement of the San Luis Valley finally began. However, the United States did not automatically reassert the Mexican land grants and the original grantees were required to petition their claim — a process that took several years and ended with mixed results. Despite this uncertainty, the first recognized permanent settlements in what is now Colorado were established within the Sangre de Cristo Grant along the Rio Culebra. These include Plaza de los Manzanares (now present-day Garcia) in 1849, San Luis in 1851 (recognized as the oldest continually occupied settlement in Colorado), and San Pedro in 1852 (Simmons, 84; Carter and Mehls, 18). Additional early settlements in the Rio Culebra valley include San Pablo (1853), San Acacio (1856), and San Francisco, or La Valley (1855).

It was just south of San Luis that the settlers first constructed several *acequias* (irrigation ditches) to distribute water from the Rio Culebra to their fields. The San Luis Peoples Ditch #1, which was constructed in 1851, is the first recorded water right in Colorado. Other ditches followed: the San Pedro Ditch and Acequia Madre Ditch, also in 1852, the Montez Ditch (1853), the Vallejos and Manzanares Ditch (1854), and the Acequiacita Ditch (1855) (Carter and Mehls, 18).

The Rio Culebra settlers laid out their farms in *varas*, long narrow strips. They ranged anywhere from 55 feet to one thousand feet long, depending upon the size and importance of the families receiving the plots. East of San Luis, a vega, or communal pasture, of nearly 900 acres was given to the families (Simmons, 86).

It was not until 1854 that Indian hostilities ceased and permanent settlements were allowed to establish within the...
Conejos Grant. In the fall of that year Jose Maria Jacques together with Lafayette Head and more than 50 other families from Abiquiu and El Llanito began the settlement of Guadalupe, near the present town of Conejos. It was here that they built Colorado’s first church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and helped establish the first and oldest Catholic parish (Simmons, 88). Here each family was also allotted a long, narrow strip of land for cultivation. These long plots extended from the river for irrigation to the foothills and mountains for pasture and timber land, but measured only about 500 feet wide (Carter and Mehls, 17). They eventually filled most of the irrigable land between the San Antonio River and La Jara Creek. As stipulated in the proclamation, pastures and watering places would be held in common, and roads in and out of town would be public (Simmons, 79).

Additional settlements of Servilleta and Mogote followed in 1854, and two irrigation ditches, the Guadalupe Main Ditch and the Mills Head Ditch, were built in 1855 (Carter and Mehls, 17). Others followed on all of the neighboring tributaries. By 1855 there were 11 ditches bringing water from the valley’s rivers to the fields. By 1857 nine more were added (Simmons, 96).

As time passed, settlement spread northward. La Garita and La Loma (near present-day Del Norte) were settled in 1858 and 1859. Across the valley, Zapata was settled in 1864 at the western base of Sierra Blanca (Simmons, 107). By the early 1860s these Hispano settlers had transformed the valley into an area typical of rural northern New Mexico with architectural styles and settlement patterns following in the tradition of Spanish and Mexican villages.

Each settlement typically was established near a creek and built around a central plaza or square, with corrilleras or linear arrangements of contiguous homes facing each other along a road. These corrilleras were separate from the plazas (Hill, 47). Less formally clustered placitas (places – originally a diminutive for plaza) also appeared in some settings operating as an informal hamlet containing a few families. As time passed, settlement continued in this tradition:

Some of the new settlements on the valley’s grants continued to be made by people from New Mexico. On the west side, between the Alamosa and La Jara Rivers, Capulin, meaning “chokecherries” was established in 1867 by people from Ojo Cliente, and La Jara was settled on the south side of the latter stream at about the same time. Plazas around La Loma expanded to the north, while Ortiz and San Antonio began to prosper in the corner of the valley south of Conejos. To the east Ojiton on Trinchera Creek and to the north Rito Alto appeared. Nearly every stream with the San Luis Valley had at least one settlement of Spanish-speaking people (Simmons, 132).

Beside the living quarters, a compound usually contained other farm related structures like barns, sheds, granaries, walls, fences, corrals, storage facilities and shelters. The earliest structures were jecales, which were built of
vertical logs plastered with mud, and typically replaced by more permanent adobe built low to the ground. Religious structures included churches and moradas, a Penitente meeting house, and cemeteries (Carter and Mehls, 20).

Town economies were based on subsistence stock raising and crop growing (Hill, 48). One scholar describes the general character to be expected once a nucleus of a settlement appeared:

Each male settler, based on his need or his ability to develop the land, was granted a narrow acreage that usually fronted the local creek and extended back to the nearby foothills. More intensive grain and garden crops were cultivated on the lower end of the long lot in the alluvial bottomlands and the hillier country upslope was used for livestock grazing and wood-gathering. Irrigation ditches distributed precious water through the settlement. Most farm holdings were small, under one hundred acres, and supported the immediate needs of the local population. Some settlers specialized in sheep grazing, making common use of larger acreage and extending a rural cultural tradition long associated with the Hispano occupancy of Northern New Mexico. By the late 1850s, between one and two thousand new migrants populated the valley, making it the most significant non Native American nucleus in Colorado before the discovery of gold at the end of the decade (Wyckoff, 40-41).

In 1860 Congress confirmed the Sangre de Cristo Grant, but adjudication of the Conejos Grant was held up by the surveyor general of New Mexico. Documents regarding the grant were not received in Colorado until 1867, six years after the new territory was created (Simmons, 143-144). It was 1900 before the Court of Private Land Claims heard the arguments and dismissed the petition on the grounds that no evidence of the original 1833 grant existed, and that the governor of New Mexico had expressed doubt regarding his own authority to grant possession (Simmons, 144). As a result, many of the early settlers of the Conejos Grant eventually lost their land when it was opened for homesteading (Simmons, 81; Carter and Mehls, 18). Following the Homestead Act of 1862, new settlements within the valley conformed to the township, range, and section pattern of development, with farmsteads being partitioned on a 160-acre grid.

**American Exploration and Military Conflict (1806-1920)**

The first American military post in the San Luis Valley was Fort Massachusetts. It was authorized in 1852 to provide protection from Ute raids and promote settlement with the valley. Located just south of Blanca Peak off the Sangre de Cristo Pass, the fort saw some action as the cavalry based there engaged in battles with the Utes and Jicarilla Apache (Carter and Mehls, 35). Abandoned in 1858 due to isolation and poor drainage, it was replaced by Fort Garland, six miles farther south.

Built by many local Rio Culebra settlers, who served as laborers, Fort Garland was built of adobe. Named after John Garland, commander of the New Mexico Territory at Fort Union at the time, it eventually contained 22 buildings. The fort’s south entrance faced Mount Blanca and was framed on either side by company quarters. Cavalry and infantry barracks surrounded a central parade ground on the east and west. Officer’s Row aligned the north side. Additional buildings included a commissary, stables complex, hospital, ice house, and workers’ quarters.

Army operations based out of Fort Garland covered much of Colorado. Troops participated in rescue missions and participated in many punitive expeditions against the Utes.
Between 1866 and 1868 the post was under the command of Kit Carson, famed for his explorations of the West.

In the 1860s several treaties were negotiated with the Utes to remove them from the San Luis Valley and relocate them to reservation lands in western and southwestern Colorado. Hostilities continued, and eventually the treaties were modified to reduce the reservation land and completely remove the Utes from the entire state except a small corner in the southwest. In 1881, all of the northern bands and the Uncompahgres were sent to a reservation in Utah (Simmons, 120). After removal of the Utes, Fort Garland was abandoned when soldiers were ordered to relocate to Fort Lewis across the San Juan Mountains to the west (Carter and Mehls, 35).

Between the close of the Mexican American War and 1861, the San Luis Valley had been in New Mexico Territory. On February 26th of that year, the Territory of Colorado was established by Congress with its boundaries almost identical to today's state line. The exception was the southern boundary, which was drawn along the 37th parallel, almost but not quite where the state line lies today. Counties were established soon after. Costilla County occupied the eastern and northern portions of the valley with San Luis as its county seat, whereas Guadalupe County encompassed the...
western side north to the Rio Grande. Seven days later its name was changed to Conejos County with its county seat bearing the same name (Simmons, 129). It was not until 1913 that Alamosa County was carved from portions of Conejos and Costilla counties.

**Early Farming and Ranching (1840-1870)**

The early Hispano settlers of the San Luis Valley were primarily poor subsistence farmers and herdsmen who brought with them from New Mexico their food culture, seeds, and traditions of farming and ranching. They spun and wove fabric for clothing, bedding, and rugs from the wool of their own sheep and goats. They also raised some cattle, hogs, and chickens but relied mainly on a vegetarian diet (Simmons, 96). Their crops consisted chiefly of *maiz blanco* (white corn), *cebolla* (onion), *aberjon* (field peas), *calavaza* (pumpkin), *manzana de agosto* (apples), *ciruelo de indio* (plums), *papa* (potatoes), *havas* (fava beans), and *chile peppers* (Shapins, 44).

Indigenous plants were used for both food and medicine, and among others included *plumajillo* (yarrow) for colds and dysentery, garlic for constipation, *chamiso hediondo* (sagebrush) for flu and pneumonia, oregano for pain in lungs, *osha* (lovage) as an antiseptic, *poleo* (brook mint) for toothache, and *romero* (rosemary) for arthritis (Everts, 46-47). Agricultural practices also followed Mexican traditions, such as use of oxen plows and *acequias*. Stock was raised on *vegas*, or common pastures. *Cercas* (fenced gardens) and roof farming were also practiced, as were many of the communal and religious traditions such as Saints’ days, fiestas, and Mexican *fandangos* (Carter and Mehls, 19).

Food preservation became a highly developed art and custom. Fruits, vegetables, meat, and chilies were carefully dried to last through the winter. These were transformed into jerky, *chicos* (green corn roasted in a traditional oven, dried, and shredded by hand), and cured and dried elk meat (Everts, 81).

**Trails, Roads, and Railroads (1820-1945)**

Since the late 16th century the Rio Grande corridor through the San Luis Valley had been a known travel route used by early Spanish explorers to access the northern reaches of their colony. By the early 18th century, such routes, most likely adapted from Indian trails, were well established and frequently used by explorers, traders, and military expeditions. By the 19th century, several of these routes were improved as wagon roads, either by toll road builders or government road builders.

Roads passable for wagons were graded in places and generally were free from tree stumps, large boulders, and deep ruts. Diaries kept by some of the travelers give accounts of the stages turning over when traversing steep slopes along valleys. Deep streams had to be bridged; shallow streams were forded. The post roads and toll roads...were built quickly and had very rough surfaces compared to the paved and even unpaved roads prepared today. Over the years many types of vehicles used the roads, ranging from huge freight wagons to Conestoga wagons and small delivery wagons. Passenger vehicles also varied considerably in size from large stagecoaches to surreys, buggies, open spring wagons, or even handcarts, such as those used by the Mormons during their immigration to Utah. Travel on the roads must have been especially difficult after strong rains or heavy snowfall. On mountain
roads heavy snowfall generally shut down the passage of both mail and passenger traffic (Scott, 2-3).

The two most important early routes included the Spanish Trail and the Taos Trail. The route now known as the Old Spanish Trail actually consisted of a network of trails that passed through six western states. Through time the trails evolved into established trade routes that linked the villages of northern New Mexico to Los Angeles. The “North Branch” of the Old Spanish Trail carried traffic through the San Luis Valley. It is believed there were several routes that comprised this Northern Branch, both to the east and west of the Rio Grande. The eastern route travelled past Costilla, New Mexico, on its way to San Luis, Fort Garland, and Crestone before turning westward over the San Juan Mountains at Cochetopa Pass. Today Route 159 essentially follows this historic route as far north as Fort Garland (Scott, map). The western route, which is still under investigation, may have connected Ojo Caliente, New Mexico, with Conejos and Monte Vista before heading north over Cochetopa Pass.

In 1821 when Mexico gained its independence, the focus of trade shifted east. The Santa Fe Trail was established as a major overland trade route linking Franklin, Missouri with Santa Fe, and opened up much of southeastern Colorado to settlement. While the main route of the Santa Fe Trail passed east of the Sangre de Cristo range, the Taos Trail (or Trappers Trail as it was known), linked Taos, New Mexico, and the San Luis Valley to the Santa Fe Trail via the Sangre de Cristo Pass, continuing northward toward Pueblo, Colorado, and Laramie, Wyoming (Scott, 2). Its alignment generally followed that of the Old Spanish Trail towards Fort Garland before heading eastward along the Sangre de Cristo Creek.

When Colorado gained territorial status in 1861, the development of transportation infrastructure quickly accelerated. In that same year, two ferry permits were granted to cross the Rio Grande. One was located near the juncture of Trinchera Creek (Stewart’s Crossing), which connected Conejos with Fort Garland, and the other near the Piñon Hills which connected Conejos with Costilla. Bridges soon followed, to include one near the juncture of Rio Culebra. These locations continue to serve as major crossings today.

Several toll roads were also constructed throughout the San Luis Valley during the latter half of the 19th century. Some of the most significant included a toll road was built by the Denver and San Luis Valley Wagon Road Company in the late 1860s to operate between Denver and the valley. This line crossed South Park and Poncha Pass and ran through the San Luis Valley on the Conejos Road as far as the New Mexico border. Otto Mears, a Russian immigrant turned entrepreneur, funded toll roads across Poncha Pass in 1867 and Cochetopa Pass in 1871, thereby opening up a route over the San Juan Mountains to the west (Simmons, 131-135). Entrance to the San Luis Valley from the east continued with Sangre de Cristo Pass Wagon Road, chartered in 1864, which essentially followed the Taos Trail (Scott, 10).

Stage lines were also established on the Taos Trail and on the Santa Fe Trail. The principal need was for transportation of people, but almost as important was the transport of freight and mail, which constituted a large part of the profit for the stage companies. In 1866, mail to the San Luis Valley traveled from Pueblo over the Sangre de Cristo Pass and entered the San Luis Valley at Fort Garland, then south to San Luis, Costilla, and on to Santa Fe (Scott, 4):
The stages traveled as rapidly as the drivers could get the horses or mules to run. Teams were changed about every 10 to 15 miles at stations where extra stock was kept in order to provide rested and vigorous animals that could maintain the schedules. These stations were called “swing” stations but they provided little comfort to the passengers, as stops were only long enough to provide for the changing of the teams. About every fourth station was equipped with a kitchen and dining room so that the passengers could take meals along the routes. These stations were called “home” stations. Some of them had beds, but generally the stages did not stop for the night and the passengers had to sleep in the coaches as they traveled through the night. Because of the sparseness of trees along the stage routes, many of the stations were simply dugouts along the banks of streams or some stations were made of adobe or, rarely, of logs or lumber. (Scott, 3).

At the close of the Civil War, railroad development quickly marched westward. In 1870 William Jackson Palmer, a construction engineer with Kansas Pacific, filed for the incorporation of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG). Believing that a rail line from Denver to New Mexico and El Paso would be a lucrative investment, the D&RG utilized narrow-gauge tracks with only three feet between rails to negotiate the sharp, steep curves of the Rocky Mountains. Starting in Denver, the line reached Colorado Springs in 1872 and Pueblo by 1873. By 1876 it had reached La Veta Pass, and a year later Garland City sprung up as a temporary end-of-track town that lasted only until the D&RG reached the Rio Grande in 1878, where Alamosa eventually grew up around its shop and roundhouse (Simmons, 155-156; Shapins, 41).

Originally called Rio Bravo, the town was platted as the Alamosa Town Company by A.C. Hunt in May 1878, only two months before the railroad reached it. Anglo-American settlement and speculation soon followed. Alamosa quickly became the commercial center of the valley as banks, mills, stores, and other businesses located there. By the 1880s it had added two newspapers, a school, and a Presbyterian church (Simmons, 159).

The D&RG continued to lay track southward, eventually linking Alamosa to Santa Fe, and westward to Chama, New Mexico, via a San Juan extension from Antonito. This latter line opened up the Colorado towns of Durango and Silverton, both important mining towns. Antonito, which was built about a mile south of Conejos in 1880, became the principal community in the southern portion of the county. Antonito soon became a bustling settlement with its own railroad depot, a section house, a bunk house, a sawmill, numerous saloons and gambling houses, a hotel, a newspaper, stores, and three churches (Simmons, 163).

The economic downtown of 1893 and recession that followed discouraged further railroad development within the valley for almost two decades. The next railroads to be built were agricultural feeder lines to meet the needs of the growing farming communities. These included the San Luis Southern, later called the San Luis Valley Southern. This line operated between Blanca and agricultural areas developed on the Costilla Estate, and was completed in 1910. An extension was eventually built through Mesita to Jaroso. The other line was the San Luis Central, built from Monte Vista to Center in 1913. It primarily hauled sugar beets, lettuce, and other produce from the agricultural center of the valley to the D&RG tracks at Monte Vista. The San Luis Central still operates seasonally, but the other line’s rails were removed in 1958 with the exception of a mile and half of track between the D&RG and a shipping facility at Blanca (Simmons, 170).
Eventually the southern line (nicknamed the “Chili Line”) between Antonito and Santa Fe lost out to competition from the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (AT&SF), a major competitor of the D&RG, and it was dismantled in the 1940s (Simmons, 164). The Cumbres Pass line to Chama continued to serve local passengers until 1951. In the early 1970s, in order to save it from being dismantled, Colorado and New Mexico cooperated in jointly purchasing the line and leasing it as a tourist attraction (Simmons, 166). The Cumbres Pass line to Chama continued to serve local passengers until 1951. In the early 1970s, in order to save it from being dismantled, Colorado and New Mexico cooperated in jointly purchasing the line and leasing it as a tourist attraction (Simmons, 166).

Mineral speculation led to the development of mining towns in the San Juan Mountains. Platoro, taking its name from silver and gold ore, was established in the 1880s. Although the gold rush primarily targeted the San Juan Mountains farther to the north and west, those mining camps and settlements created tremendous demands for food that farmers and ranchers in the San Luis Valley were well positioned to satisfy (Wyckoff, 198).

Lettuce, spinach, peas, and cauliflower were important vegetable crops being shipped from the valley; barley, beans, oats, and hay were also produced extensively. (Simmons, 241). Cattle and sheep raising also grew to be important industries. Entrepreneurs soon established mills, warehouses, and other types of facilities related to the logistics of moving, storing, and processing agricultural products. Because of the great distance between the San Luis Valley and urban markets, farmers needed to pack the most perishable vegetable in ice to reduce spoilage. Doing so required the construction of packing sheds, ice houses, and crate-making facilities (Mondragon-Valdez, E-27). As commercial potato production also increased during the first half of the 20th century. Hispano farmers constructed soterranos, or large underground cellars, which helped to

**Late 19th and Early 20th-Century Agriculture and Settlement (1870-1930)**

With the extension of the railroad into the San Luis Valley, an established network of feeder roads, and improvements in irrigation technology, agricultural development began to progress rapidly in the 1870s and the population of the region boomed. Practices soon shifted towards larger farms and ranches owned and operated by Anglo-American migrants who acquired much of the wealth in the valley. Many areas of the valley were opened to farming for the first time by these settlers. Other sections of the valley saw a retreat of Hispano influences. The Medano Ranch, for example, was assembled gradually through the Dickey brothers’ purchase of Hispano farms. Its 130,000 acres were eventually sold in 1882 to New York investors who developed the largest cattle operation in the valley (Simmons, 219). Likewise the large Zapata Ranch was acquired by Texas cattlemen in the 1870s (Simmons, 294). Some districts, however, particularly in the south, maintained their Hispano identities that are reflected in the landscape today (Wyckoff, 198).
maintain even temperatures and keep the potatoes from freezing. Anglo farmers adopted these Hispano construction techniques and build above-ground storage facilities made of double-wall adobe (Mondragon-Valdez, E-27).

Cheap and abundant labor was needed to work these farms, and farmers began to hire local Hispano-Americans and immigrants from Mexico as day laborers as the vegetable industry expanded. These workers built small adobe homes near the towns where they worked (Simmons, 239). In 1909 the Costilla Estate Development Company encouraged Japanese, who wished to emigrate from California, to work the farms on the estate. Some came as tenant farmers, while others moved into a cooperative colony called Culebra Village. These Japanese farmers perfected the practice of truck farming in the San Luis Valley, specializing in cool weather crops like spinach, lettuce, cauliflower, and broccoli that were well suited to the valley’s cool summers. Many settled in the area of Jaroso and San Acacio and around Blanca and Fort Garland (Simmons, 239 240). Within a decade they expanded their agricultural land holdings from 53 acres in 1919 to more than 10,000 acres (Mondragon-Valdez, E-27).

Other ethnic and religious groups also played a role in the settlement of the valley. In 1879 Mormon settlers seeking religious freedom established the town of Manassa. In their surrounding fields the Mormons grew wheat, field peas, oats, and alfalfa. Eventually they went on to establish Morgan and Sanford (Simmons, 222).

In 1876 T.C. Henry and his Colorado Loan and Trust Company created demonstration farms to lure land speculators and participated in the construction of the Rio Grande, San Luis, Monte Vista, and Empire canals, all in the western portion of the valley. Although Henry and his investors were not successful, farmers benefited from the construction of these irrigation systems and eventually came to control them through local cooperatives (Wyckoff, 202). Artesian wells were drilled to tap the underground aquifer beginning in 1887. Within the next decade about three thousand were drilled.

These important changes in the scale and technology of irrigation greatly expanded the number of arable acres in the valley. These changes also influenced the distribution of wealth. Traditional acequias were restricted to short laterals that served nearby bottomlands. The new ditches reached higher benches and the artesian wells watered lands wherever drilling succeeded (Wyckoff, 202).

After the financial panic of 1893, agricultural prices dropped and coincidentally a severe drought began. Irrigation canals dried up, except for the Rio Grande Canal, which took almost the entire flow (Simmons, 233). During this period of depression, many farms failed and farmers fled the valley in search of more reliable sources of water. Several of the small communities disappeared.

During the early 1900s too much water became the problem, as irrigated lands near Mosca and Hooper became waterlogged and alkaline (Simmons, 231-232). The result was widespread abandonment of more than 300,000 acres in the valley’s center between 1890 and 1920 (Wyckoff, 203). Smaller scale versions of the problem appeared elsewhere in the valley.

The longest dry spell recorded in Colorado’s history spanned the entire decade of the 1930s. With the land already stressed ecologically, and the Great Depression further crippling
much of the region, the agricultural market plummeted. Many farmers simply abandoned their holdings and left the area, leading to further attrition of communities.

Water is the reason we came here (to Montrose). In the San Luis Valley where we came from, the water was . . . about the time they started sprinkling irrigation over there and we were still doing flood irrigation and that type and about the last part of September, we’d almost always run out of water and we were tired of a crop getting almost finished and then run out of water. We had some good friends that lived over here and they convinced us that maybe this was the place we ought to be and there was plenty of water. (Keith Catlin, oral history interview; speaking about why he moved from the San Luis Valley in 1949 (CRWUA).)

Modern Agriculture and Water Management (1945- Present)
As had been the case throughout the first half of the 20th century, the economy of the heritage area throughout the second half was inextricably tied to water. In the 1950s mechanized center pivot irrigation began to alter the agricultural practices of the valley. Pivot irrigation is less labor intensive, and – because it relies on water from the aquifer – more reliable. As mentioned earlier, this system is based on a well being in the center of a field and an irrigation pipe mounted on wheels gradually moving in a circle around the well. Most of the center pivot systems are found in the northwestern portion of the heritage area, with the highest concentration actually found in Saguache and Rio Grande counties.

In 1936, the Bureau of Reclamation began to study the water needs of the San Luis Valley, and the results of that research led to the initiation of the San Luis Valley Project. It took more than a decade, however, for the project to get under way. The San Luis Valley Project is separated into two divisions, the Closed Basin Division and the Conejos Division. The Closed Basin Division is located north and east of Alamosa in Alamosa and Saguache Counties, with the Conejos Division south and west of Alamosa in Conejos County (Simonds, n.p.).

The primary feature of the San Luis Valley Project is the Platoro Dam and Reservoir, located on the Conejos River about one mile west of the small town of Platoro. The dam was built in 1949 to control floodwater and provide supplemental water to irrigate approximately 73,890 acres of land in the Conejos Water Conservancy District, 40 miles away. In the Closed Basin Division, the Closed Basin Drain salvages water from the basin via wells, pumps, laterals, and canals, and transports that water to the Rio Grande for use elsewhere (Simonds).

All operations of the San Luis Valley Project are subject to the provisions of the Rio Grande Compact of 1938 regulating the development of the waters of the Rio Grande north of Fort Quitman, Texas. The compact establishes regulations concerning the quantity and quality of water delivered to the New Mexico state line. This is done through a schedule of delivery based upon the inflow and outflow of water in the San Luis Valley for the years 1928 through 1937. Under the compact, storage projects in Colorado may only store water in excess of the amount required for delivery to the New Mexico state line. If the schedule is not met, it results in a debit that must be repaid in subsequent years (Simonds).

Today the crops grown within the northern portion of the heritage areas are mainly potatoes, wheat, native hay, and alfalfa with some lettuce and spinach as secondary crops. Potatoes, lettuce, and spinach are produced for the national market. Alfalfa is grown for dairy farms in New Mexico and Texas. Coors Brewing Company also purchases 60 percent of its barley from the San Luis Valley to make its beer (Shapins, 71).

Within the southern portion of the heritage area where Hispano settlement areas and agricultural traditions still dominate, the lands are primarily used for pasture. The Rio Culebra Cooperative in Costilla County represents 52 family farmers and ranchers. In addition to pastured beef, they also market chicos and two kinds of beans (bolitas and havas).

Socio-economic Change and Reflection in Today’s Cultural Landscape (1930-Present)
For many Hispano residents, the Great Depression transformed chronic underemployment into mass unemployment. Unlike the Anglo residents who tended to move elsewhere, those in Hispano communities tended
to remain near their ancestral homes. Rising poverty throughout the country spurred President Roosevelt’s New Deal program, including its Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA undertook several construction projects throughout the San Luis Valley, most notably road, bridge, and school construction. Among other projects, these included the Rito Seco Bridge, the San Luis District One School and Junior High School in San Luis, and the Chama School in Chama (Mondragon-Sanchez, E-30-33).

Despite this influx of government funds, the population of the region plummeted, and Costilla County witnessed the largest population decline in the state. Between 1940 and 1950, Costilla lost 19 percent of its population. This trend continued in 1960, as out-migration accelerated by 25 percent. The closing of the Taylor Ranch to those with rights to resources on the ranch, which made it possible for small herders and farmers to survive economically, was a unique factor in the population loss of the 1960s.

Conejos County also suffered. Peaking in 1940, out-migration there caused a 28 percent decrease in population by 1960. Both Costilla and Conejos counties were very slow to recover from this downward trend as both continued to lose population until 1980 and 1990, respectively. However, this influx was short lived as both have lost population over the last decade. The 2010 population of Costilla County (3,524) is still less than half of its 1940 peak, and Conejos County (8,256) remains down by 30 percent (U.S. Census Bureau).

Alamosa County is the exception to the downward trend as its population has increased. With only one decade of minor loss (a 5 percent decrease between 1950 and 1960), Alamosa County’s population has grown almost 50 percent since 1940 and currently makes up over half of the population in the heritage area. Most of this growth has occurred since 1980. The City of Alamosa and the unincorporated area of Alamosa East (a designated census community) together comprise more than 66 percent of the county’s population. Overall, however, the population of Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has increased less than 1 percent over the last decade and falls well below the average 17 percent growth rate of the state. Table 3-1 shows the total population change of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area compared to the population of Colorado and the United States between 1980 and 2010.

The physical effects of these historic population changes are evident in the cultural landscape. What exists today is a reflection of community adaptations to economic expansion and contraction, as well as the historical differences between the U.S. Public Land Survey System and the Spanish and Mexican varas system of land subdivision.

Founded in 1878 as a railroad town for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, the City of Alamosa possesses a physical form that represents rail town development traditions that occurred throughout the western and midwestern United States between 1870 and 1920. As the primary aggregator

| Table 3-1: Population Change within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, 1980-2010 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Alamosa                           | 11,799 | 3.30% | 13,617 | 15.41% | 14,966 | 9.91% | 15,445 | 3.2% |
| Conejos                           | 7,794  | -0.66% | 7,453  | -4.38% | 8,400  | 12.71% | 8,256  | -1.71% |
| Costilla                          | 3,071  | -0.65% | 3,190  | 3.87%  | 3,663  | 14.83% | 3,524  | -3.79% |
| Sangre de Cristo NHA              | 22,664 | 1.27% | 24,260 | 6.58%  | 27,029 | 10.24% | 27,225 | .73%  |
| Colorado                          | 2,889,964 | 30.9% | 3,294,394 | 14.0% | 4,301,261 | 30.6% | 5,029,196 | 16.9% |
| United States                     | 226,545,805 | 11.5% | 248,709,873 | 9.8% | 281,421,906 | 13.2% | 308,745,538 | 9.7% |

Alamosa was one of approximately 200 towns constructed in Colorado between 1870 and 1890 as the railroad moved west of the Front Range and into the mountains and western plateau (Hill, 94). Most of these relied on the mining, smelting, ranching, lumber, and irrigated agricultural industries. Alamosa’s economy relied primarily on the ranching and agricultural industries, as well as the railroad itself, which provided management and oversight of the switching yard and maintenance functions for the D&RG railroad in the San Luis Valley, and the only combined standard and narrow gauge roundhouse in the United States.

In addition to the railroad and the strong economy that evolved from it, the City of Alamosa has grown to be the largest city in the San Luis Valley for several other reasons. Chief among them are the higher education and medical institutions that were founded there. These include the San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center, which began in the downtown in 1927 as the Alamosa Hospital. In the 1930s it relocated to the west of the downtown and has grown significantly since that time. Today it is the primary medical facility and largest employer in within the heritage area with more than 500 employees. Adams State University (founded in 1921 by Colorado legislator Billy Adams as a teacher’s college), which is also located west of the downtown, is the heritage area’s second largest employer. Most of its expansion occurred in the 1950s and 1960s as the school’s enrollment grew from 349 to more than 2,000 within a 15-year period. Today it offers associate, bachelor and master degrees to 2,500 on-campus students and 7,000 extended study students. Alamosa is also home to the heritage area’s only airport, the San Luis Valley Regional Airport, which provides commercial airline service to Denver. It was originally established as Bergman Field on the south side of Alamosa. Today almost all of Alamosa’s historic urban fabric is still intact. Post-1970 suburban development has expanded to the northwest of town along Main Street (Hwy 160), with a smaller amount of more industrial related development to the southwest along Frontage Road (Hwy 285).

Antonito, like Alamosa, was established as a D&RG rail town. It sprang up in 1880 along the Chile Line extension that reached southward to Santa Fe. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Antonito served as an important switching
station and critical link to the D&RG’s western extension to Chama, New Mexico. Like Alamosa, Antonito’s physical form deferred to the railroad, which formed the community’s eastern boundary. The historic train station, which is currently unused but undergoing historic restoration, is centrally located within the town. Large numbers of sheep from ranches in the southern part of the Valley were shipped from Antonito, and wool brokers also served the area (Simmons, 276). Prior to World War II, Antonito had more than 3,000 residents. Its population, however, began to decrease soon after the Chili Line was dismantled in the 1940s, and today comprises fewer than 800 residents.

Other towns that sprang up along the rail lines include La Jara, Blanca, Romeo, New San Acacio, Mesita, Jaroso, Mosca, and Hooper. All served as secondary rail shipping points and supply centers for the valley’s farming and ranching operations. While originally established as a military outpost, the town of Fort Garland also expanded substantially in 1898 after the D&RG laid track on its way west to Alamosa. Except for Mesita and Jarosa, which remained small, the rail communities developed from a platted grid system derived from the U.S. Public Land Survey System of land subdivision.

Manassa and Sanford, the two other most populated communities within the heritage area after Alamosa, were also platted communities that developed within a grid network. Originally Mormon communities, they followed in the traditions of western town survey and subdivision. Manassa’s settlers selected the land for their colony based upon assumptions that the railroad would soon be built nearby. One year later, however, the railroad bypassed the colony three miles to the west.

The pattern of grid development based on land speculation and railroad infrastructure contrasts significantly with the Hispano communities that evolved from the vara system of land subdivision and subsistence farming, and where town centers were oriented around plazas. While this historic Hispano settlement typology is reflected most prominently in San Luis, the largest of its type and the heritage area’s sixth most populated town, it is also represented in other historic Hispano communities and placitas, albeit to a lesser degree due to their small size. These include San Acacio Viejo, San Pedro, San Francisco (La Valley), San Pablo, Los Fuertes, San Antonio, San Francisco, Garcia, Conejos, Guadalupe, Chama, Las Mesitas, Los Cerritos, Las Sauces, Ortiz, Cañon, Mogote, Paisaje, Espinosa, Capulin, and Lobatos (Cenicero). In many cases only one or a few family homes remain to mark the settlements that once contained several dozen or several hundred residents. In other instances, such as Lobatos and Los Cerritos, the historic places contain only a cemetery, church, or foundation remnants that signify its former community (Simmons, 275-307).

Despite the fact that Costilla County stands alone as Colorado’s only county-wide break in the township and range grid system (Hill, 49), its lands have not been immune to speculative land subdivision. More than 30 percent of the county and almost all the undeveloped land between the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and the Rio Grande (except for a portion of the San Pedro Mesa, the San Luis Hills, and Trinchera Creek and Rio Grande lowlands) has been subdivided with platted roads. In total, there are 29 separate subdivisions that include 37,000 lots on approximately 260,000 acres. Most were platted in the 1960s and 1970s. If all these lots were to be developed, it could potentially add more than 45,000 housing units and 118,000 people to Costilla County. However, more than 90 percent of these lots remain undeveloped. Due to environmental constraints, economic conditions, and the lack of services and infrastructure, full build-out is unlikely. Should growth occur, the current county comprehensive plan has established a vision for an alternative model that will encourage future development to occur within and around established community areas and protect its agricultural and environmental resources (Costilla Comprehensive Plan, 26).
Chapter 4 • Historic Preservation

Introduction

The national significance of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is conveyed through its rich mosaic of architectural and archeological resources, ethnic settlements, agricultural landscapes, native languages, and cultural traditions. These resources are what remain to tell the story of the region's history. The National Heritage Area is significant for its unique ecology, Native American occupation, early Hispano settlement, American westward migration, and the evolution of the San Luis Valley's agricultural economy.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a living cultural landscape that continues to evolve over time. The resources that contribute to the cultural landscape's character and significance are worthy of preservation. As such, they are affected by the changing economic conditions and current challenges associated with shrinking populations, high unemployment, and the scarcity of public funding available for conservation and preservation initiatives.

National Heritage Areas, as designated by Congress, are uniquely structured to address the challenge of making the region’s natural and cultural resources relevant to local interests and needs. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is the vehicle through which this region’s living cultural landscape can be managed to promote both natural and cultural resource stewardship and economic revitalization. By providing regional leadership and by supporting local initiatives, the National Heritage Area can play an important role in preserving historic resources.

This chapter provides an overview of the types of cultural resources within the heritage area and the range of public and private organizations involved in their stewardship. It describes the challenges associated with preservation of historic resources within the National Heritage Area and proposes a program for new and ongoing resource stewardship efforts by heritage area partners.

Preservation Context

The National Heritage Area is home to a wide variety of historic and cultural resources significant to its various periods of historical development. These resources are closely related to its landscape and to landscape uses over time.

In many areas, the preservation and appropriate management of the region’s landscape resources and adaptive reuse of the Joyce Block in Antonito includes retail space on the first floor and bed-and-breakfast lodging on the second. Such privately sponsored preservation projects are critical to achieving momentum for preservation in the National Heritage Area.
landscape character also tend to preserve significant associated historic and cultural resources. Because of the National Heritage Area’s large size and the economic challenges that have been evident throughout the region’s history, the overall pace of change has been moderate and the range and number of significant resources that remain is impressive. Yet because of these same economic challenges, many resources are under-appreciated, neglected, and threatened. Local funding for historic preservation has not been available from either public or private sources. Neither, though, has funding been available for renovation, development, or change. Consequently, many historic resources that might not otherwise exist have been preserved because of the lack of development pressure and the lack of available personal income to renovate properties and make adverse changes.

The National Heritage Area is noted for its multi-cultural character. Because of limited population growth, the multi-cultural character of the landscape and its communities remains evident. Like its built environment, the region’s historic ethnic and cultural character can be clearly read and appreciated today. Historic preservation in the National Heritage Area is about more than just buildings. Cultural traditions, language, folklore, religion, art, foodways, and agricultural practices are as important to preservation as the built environment. In fact, they may be more important. The National Heritage Area has a living culture rooted in its past that has changed over time but retains its distinctive character.

Of particular note are the areas of Hispanic settlement that are both historically significant and continue to retain their cultural identity. As the northern edge of Spanish and Mexican settlement into the American frontier, communities in the southern portion of the San Luis Valley have been relatively isolated from change and have retained many linguistic and cultural traditions that have been lost to Hispanic communities farther south. As a result, the Hispanic communities are distinctive and unique and warrant particular attention to both their physical and cultural legacies.

History and traditions related to Mexican land grants are tied closely to the National Heritage Area’s cultural landscape and its patterns of long-lot agricultural fields and acequias. La Vega, the 633-acre communal pasture east of San Luis, and associated sites have been studied for National Historic Landmark designation. The vernacular architecture and settlement patterns of the National Heritage Area’s Culebra River villages are well-recognized and have been documented in a National Register multiple property context study and related surveys and studies.

Subterranean soterranos (food cellars), which take advantage of the natural cooling of the earth, were historically used to store harvested fruits and vegetables.

Anglo, Mormon, Japanese-American, and Dutch history and cultural traditions are evident in other National Heritage Area communities and closely tied to railroads, the automobile, agriculture, water rights, and other themes. Today’s settlement patterns are laid over a natural landscape that was the migratory domain of Native Americans for thousands of years, with archeological sites providing evidence of their use and with competing claims of religious significance by more recent tribes.

Historic resources are significant, character-defining features of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. They include not only individual buildings, but the groupings of buildings and structures that comprise communities and represent settlement patterns of various periods of the National Heritage Area’s historical development. In some areas, such as the smaller Hispanic villages, only ghosts of the former settlements remain, evident in landscape patterns more than in the extant buildings themselves. These and other resources, including Native American sites, early homesteads, the ruins of moradas (buildings reserved for devotions by the Penitentes, a Roman Catholic brotherhood found in the American Southwest) and soterranos (adobe food cellars), and the region’s early trails, bespeak the fragility of the National Heritage Area’s historic legacy.

The National Heritage Area is a cultural landscape in which the overall composition is more important than its individual parts. Agricultural patterns and transportation networks convey the stories of Anglo, Hispanic, and other ethnic groups. Everything is closely tied to characteristics of the natural landscape and access to water especially. Above all, the interplay of cultural traditions of all of the National Heritage Area’s ethnic groups is a key part of the preservation picture. Preservation within this living landscape is a challenge with multiple facets and possibilities.
Figure 4-1. National and State Register Listed Properties.
Documenting the Valley’s Historic Resources

History Colorado’s Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) serves as the federally recognized State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and administers federal and state preservation programs, including the National Register of Historic Places, Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, Centennial Farms Program, and surveys of historic and archaeological resources (refer to sidebar on p. 4-13). Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, more than 2,300 properties and features have been inventoried through historic and archeological research surveys overseen by the OAHP. Of the properties surveyed:

- 673 of the properties are in Alamosa County, 1,275 are in Conejos County, and 375 are in Costilla County;
- 37 individual properties have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Properties (18 in Alamosa County, 13 in Conejos County, and six in Costilla County);
- One National Register Historic District with multiple contributing buildings has been listed (Plaza de San Luis de la Culebra Historic District in San Luis);
- 16 properties have been determined eligible for listing on the National Register but not yet listed, including 13 historic resources and 3 archeological resources; and
- 47 properties have been determined eligible for listing on the National Register during field survey work but require updated assessments and additional research to verify their eligibility.

Descriptions of the properties listed on the National and State Registers within the heritage area are included in Appendix B along with a list of properties determined eligible. The locations of properties are shown in Figure 4-1.

Of the 18 National Register properties in Alamosa County, 11 are located in the City of Alamosa (see Figure 4-2), all but one of which are buildings. The Medano-Zapata
Ranch, owned by the Nature Conservancy, is home to three listed resources, and two are located in Great Sand Dunes National Park. The Trujillo Homesteads, an early Hispano settlement on the Medano-Zapata Ranch, has recently been designated as a National Historic Landmark, the nation’s highest historic preservation designation, for its significance to American Latino Heritage.

Of the 13 National Register properties in Conejos County, eight are buildings, four of which are in Antonito (see Figure 4-3) and two in Sanford. The site of Zebulon Pike’s Stockade in Conejos County is a National Historic Landmark in addition to being listed on the National Register. Conejos County resources include the entirety of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, a linear resource recently designated as a National Historic Landmark. Two of Conejos County’s listed resources are an engine and a railroad car associated with the Cumbres & Toltec. Two others are railroad depots, in Antonito and La Jara. The high number of resources surveyed in Conejos County is related to the amount of federally owned land in the county and resource surveys undertaken for federal purposes.

Of the seven National Register listings in Costilla County, the one historic district is located in San Luis along with an individually listed building, culvert, and bridge (see Figure 4-4). Fort Garland is listed on the National Register and preserves a stagecoach which is also a listed resource. As mentioned above, La Vega and the San Luis People’s Ditch have been studied for National Historic Landmark designation for their association with American Latino Heritage as the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant Historic District. The multiple property submission The Culebra River Villages of Costilla County, Colorado provides a context study under which Hispano vernacular buildings have been evaluated and assessed for designation.

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places or in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties is important because the registers identify and recognize significant...
resources in accordance with professionally developed criteria and standards. Such recognition does not, however, guarantee preservation. Most historic buildings and other resources are privately owned, and listing in one or the other of the registers does not require owners (or local governments) to take action to preserve them. However, there may be tax benefits for historic preservation, or, in some cases, Colorado makes matching grants for preservation through its State Historical Fund. The Colorado State Register of Historic Properties provides an alternative for some properties that may fall just short of National Register designation eligibility and also provides access to state funding for preservation.

Federal Preservation Initiatives
The federal government has been particularly active within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, in part because of the amount of federally owned land in and adjacent to the San Luis Valley (refer to Figure 5-1). Within the past two decades, federal, state, local, and nonprofit entities have collaborated closely in a variety of ways, most notably in the protection of ecologically significant lands in the vicinity of Great Sand Dunes National Park. Federal activities have included the identification, documentation, and protection of historic resources as well as technical assistance and professional guidance with preservation issues.

Key federal agencies involved in the San Luis Valley include the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service. Cultural resource, landscape, and planning professionals from these agencies are involved in the management of the region’s federally owned lands and, as residents of the San Luis Valley, are also engaged in local initiatives. Their interest and presence within the valley provides a range of professional expertise that is an important asset in support of historic preservation interests.

Several of these federal agencies are involved in studies and initiatives related to historic resources that support heritage area goals. These include:

Figure 4-4. National and State Register Listed Properties within the town of San Luis.
Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Management Plan
Historic Preservation

- Technical assistance in planning for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its partners by National Park Service staff from the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Intermountain Regional Office in Denver.

- Identification of cultural resource sites on federally owned lands by cultural resource specialists from each of the related federal agencies.

- Archeological investigations on federally owned lands that contribute to the knowledge of pre-historic and historic occupation of the San Luis Valley.

- Preparation of a National Historic Landmark draft nomination for the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant Historic District in the vicinity of San Luis and assistance with preparation of a successful nomination for the Trujillo Homesteads in the Medano-Zapata Ranch as part of the National Park Service’s American Latino Heritage Initiative.

- Preparation of a Reconnaissance Survey Report for the San Luis Valley and Sangre de Cristo Mountains for the purpose of identifying opportunities to preserve and interpret nationally significant American Latino heritage sites.

- Designation of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail under joint management of the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management with preparation of a comprehensive management plan, study of high-value scenic and cultural landscapes along federally owned portions of the trail, and technical assistance for its preservation and interpretation.

- Technical assistance in the preparation of a trails, recreation, and open space plan for Costilla County by the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program.

- Technical assistance by the National Park Service to New Mexico’s Northern Rio Grande National
Historic Preservation

Heritage Area, located directly south of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, in conserving and interpreting a mosaic of cultures and history in the area, including that of the eight Native American pueblos and descendants of Spanish settlers.

Centennial Farms

The Colorado Centennial Farms program designates farms and ranches that have been owned and operated by the same family for 100 years or more. The program was established to honor the significant role that these families have had in settling and shaping Colorado. Centennial Farms receive a sign to display on their property, and each year Colorado’s newest centennial farm and ranch families are honored during an awards ceremony held in late August at the Colorado State Fair in Pueblo.

Since the program’s inception in 1986 through 2009, 375 farms and ranches have been recognized under the program, with more than 200 receiving Historic Structures Awards for continued use of at least four structures 50 years or older. Designated Centennial Farms, the majority of which were established between 1880 and 1895, are located in 61 of 64 counties. Within the heritage area, there are 11 Centennial Farms (see Figure 4-5). Established in 1851, the Ortega Farm in San Luis is Colorado’s oldest designated Centennial Farm. Centennial Farms within the heritage area include:

- A. Prax Ortega Farm, Costilla (est. 1851)
- Corpus A. Gallegos Ranches, Costilla (est. 1860)
- Rio Culebra Ranch, Costilla (est. 1863)
- Stewart Ranch, Conejos (est. 1863)
- Gonzales Farm, Conejos (est. 1870)
- Maddux Ranch, Alamosa (est. 1874)
- Jones Ranch, Alamosa (est. 1884)
- Salazar Farm and Ranch, Conejos (est. 1888)
- Valdez Farm, Conejos (est. 1890)
- Atencio Farm, Costilla (est. 1894)
- Paul Peterson Ranch, Conejos (est. 1900)

Local Preservation Planning

Despite the significance of National and State Register designation, most preservation activity takes place at the community level. In fact, the majority of buildings and other types of resources that contribute to the historic character of the National Heritage Area’s communities and landscapes are not listed or eligible for listing in the National Register. The degree to which historic resources are valued by local communities as essential components of community character is most often reflected in community planning processes and the degree to which private sector initiatives incorporate historic preservation values and concepts into their development projects.

Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, many individuals recognize the importance of its heritage and are strong advocates for historic preservation. However, the degree to which governmental entities embrace historic preservation as key to community revitalization and quality of life is mixed. This section describes existing policies to support historic preservation; jurisdictions not included here do not (yet) have policies and incentives for preservation.

County comprehensive plans generally recognize the importance of preserving historic resources. The Conejos County Land Use Plan, for instance, includes historic and cultural resources as components on its environmental review checklist for new development and outlines a six-step process for resource protection. It recognizes state and nationally designated sites as well as the potential for landmarks of local interest. Among its goals are the following (quoted from the plan):

- Sites and structures listed on State and National Registers of Historic Places shall be included on the environmental checklist at the initial stages of a development project. Other landmarks of local interest shall also be included on the checklist. The development review process shall consider options for preserving and protecting these features and sites.
- Preservation of unique or distinctive natural features shall be considered in the design of development. As with other resources, open space areas shall be used to protect and preserve the special places of the county.
- Ridgelines shall be protected from development using a variety of tools which are fair to landowners.
All buildings and structures shall be integrated with their natural surroundings. Building placement and height shall be designed to avoid blocking scenic views from public rights-of-way, historic byways, parks, and other public areas.

Update Land Use Code with design guidelines that screen road cuts and structures, and sign regulations that protect scenic views along roadways in Conejos County.

A county wide survey of historic and cultural resources should be initiated in conjunction with the Colorado Historical Society. This survey will serve to identify, catalog, and prioritize historic resources within Conejos County.

Incorporate a historic preservation ordinance in the revised zoning regulations and form a certified local government to obtain State Historic Funding.

Similarly, the Costilla County Comprehensive Plan states that the county will (quoted from the plan):

- Work with the Colorado Historical Society and/or others to identify sites for inclusion on the State and National Historic Register and provide incentives for the renovation of historic buildings and other structures.
- Update Land Use Code to include provisions that protect historic properties within Costilla County.
- Create “village center” guidelines, permitting commercial and residential uses to mingle in Chama, San Pablo, Mesita, San Francisco and San Acacio.

Costilla County shall strive to diversify the economic base of Costilla County. Eco-tourism, the marketing of arts and crafts, and telecommunication-based businesses shall be promoted. Special effort will be made to attract new businesses that add value to agricultural products. Cottage industries that complement the area’s natural and cultural attributes shall also be encouraged.

The R & R Market in San Luis is the oldest continuously operating family business in Colorado.

These and other stated policies provide a basis for additional preservation and community revitalization initiatives at the county and community levels. Current land use codes, however, do not yet offer the strong incentives or guidance in preserving historic resources and community character that could be developed from these policies.

The City of Alamosa’s approach to historic preservation provides a strong local model. It includes the creation of a Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, participation in History Colorado’s Certified Local Government Program, and implementation of a Downtown Design Overlay within its zoning ordinance.

Alamosa’s Historic Preservation Advisory Committee oversees the local designation of historic properties and a design review process for exterior changes to the 13 historic buildings that are currently designated locally. It also manages the city’s participation as a Certified Local Government. As part of its responsibilities, the committee undertakes public educational activities, including publication of a local walking tour.

There is no local historic district in the city, however, and, beyond designation on the City of Alamosa historic register...
and the awarding of plaques to designated sites, there is no local incentive program to promote historic preservation.

The city’s Downtown Design Overlay complements the role of the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee and provides a broader approach to preservation that has contributed to the successful revitalization initiatives that have been achieved in downtown Alamosa. Among its provisions, the overlay states that the city will “Encourage new development that complements the existing character and historic qualities of Downtown Alamosa, preserve the downtown’s existing historic structures and buildings, and coordinate design to sustain and further encourage a cohesive downtown core.”

The overlay lists design standards that are mandatory and for which exceptions can only be obtained through a zoning variance and guidelines that are not mandatory but are strongly recommended. Design review is undertaken at the staff level.

Planning processes similar to Alamosa’s would be particularly appropriate as part of community revitalization programs in San Luis and Antonito. Historic preservation, revitalization, and design programs are not evident in other heritage area communities, though San Luis is well positioned because of its designated historic district. Alamosa and San Luis have benefited from investment in streetscape and infrastructure improvements that support community revitalization.

Preservation Issues

The key preservation issues and perceived threats to cultural resources identified by participants during the planning process for this management plan include:

- Some of the unique aspects of the region’s heritage such as cemeteries, bridges, moradas, land grants, historic settlements, and agricultural traditions have critically important research and preservation needs.
- A thorough inventory of historic structures is needed.
- Many communities have empty buildings that are poorly maintained due to poor economic conditions. This neglect and deterioration eventually leads to loss of historic resources.
- There is need for better education and awareness of the benefits of preservation, as well as more funding support. Privately owned historic structures are often not appreciated or cared for appropriately. History Colorado’s State Historical Fund could be tapped more broadly for support both in education and in preservation projects.
- In many instances there are inappropriate treatments to historic buildings; most, however, may be reversible with good technical assistance.
- There is need for a regional planning approach and land use tools that encourage and facilitate preservation (i.e., zoning and land use ordinances, historic district
designations, building codes, design guidelines, etc.), but people are not familiar with these tools and tend to be resistant to governmental regulation. Some residents are suspicious of government, especially above the local level.

- There is need for craftsmen experienced in preservation techniques and traditional building trades.
- Some local contractors have trouble meeting bonding requirements, which may result in contractors being brought in from outside the region.
- Some preservation construction techniques cost more. People and communities cannot afford excess costs. Where they may not cost more in actuality, the perception that preservation costs more is a barrier to considering preservation options, which sometimes at least have the virtue of being amenable to phased and low-intervention solutions (fixing windows instead of complete—and expensive—replacement, for example).
- Professional standards are needed for accuracy and documentation related to historical research, oral history, story-telling, and folklore.
- Local history is not taught in schools; state history does not recognize San Luis Valley history.
- There is a loss of cultural crafts, food traditions, herbal traditions, and religious traditions.
- Preservation of the local dialect is being lost; words are different; standard Spanish is taught in schools. The local dialect is not supported or acknowledged.

The latter three issues are so important in this particular National Heritage Area that an entire chapter in this management plan, Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions, is devoted to them.

THE PLANNING FOUNDATION FOR PRESERVATION

A foundation and conceptual direction for historic preservation within the management plan is provided by the National Heritage Area’s enabling legislation (see sidebar), goals that were developed by the heritage area’s board and steering committee, and input from residents and stakeholders who participated in the planning process.

Heritage Area Goals for Preservation

Two of the National Heritage Area’s primary goals relate to telling its stories and developing a vibrant heritage tourism sector in support of preservation, living traditions, and community revitalization. Within these two primary goals, three specific goals touch on preservation in terms of physical structures, living heritage resources, and cultural identity (see sidebar on next page). Historic preservation activities support all three of these goals.

Direction for Preservation from the Planning Process

During workshops conducted as part of the planning process, ideas and options were considered for development of the heritage area. Participants identified historic preservation as one of the areas of greatest need. Much of the discussion emphasized the need to recognize and preserve the National Heritage Area’s living cultural legacies and make them relevant to local residents. Concern was expressed that these legacies are not just evolving but are being lost through a local lack of concern that is reinforced by lack of economic opportunity. The central goal of placing the National Heritage Area’s unique culture at the center of economic opportunity and daily life was expressed in a variety of ways. Under the topics of Culture and Community and Historic Preservation, ideas that would enhance cultural values were
Preservation Goals for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Primary Goal 1: Support development of a vibrant heritage tourism sector that stimulates preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.

- Historic Preservation: Support the preservation, use/reuse, rehabilitation, and/or restoration of historic resources as a top priority in all heritage development projects.

Primary Goal 2: Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization.

- Culture & Community: Protect and celebrate living heritage resources—language, art, traditions, spiritual, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.

- Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

Strategic Objectives for Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is among the heritage area’s highest priorities. If we do not save what we have, we lose touchstones of our culture and history. Heritage area partners recognize that the National Heritage Area is home to a rich mosaic of living cultures, rooted in history but alive and continuing to evolve today. The National Heritage Area’s cultural traditions are closely intertwined with and expressed through its communities and its landscape. These two ideas of living cultural traditions and a living cultural landscape are central to the heritage area’s approach to historic preservation.

The goal of the heritage area is to place cultural values at the center of community interests. This will be accomplished by raising public awareness and by realizing the economic benefits of heritage-based initiatives. Each chapter of this management plan plays a role in this concept. Historic preservation concentrates upon recognizing and preserving the physical components of our heritage that illuminate our history and give our communities their unique character. The National Heritage Area’s approach to historic preservation includes the following strategic objectives:

- Connect with federal and state initiatives: Important work in recognizing and identifying cultural landscapes and associated historic resources is happening at the federal and state levels through several initiatives. It is important for the heritage area to be at the center of these efforts so we can connect with and build from them. While they are being undertaken by others, the heritage area should support them, participate where feasible, incorporate them into heritage-area initiatives, and identify follow-up to support preservation within the heritage area.

- Continue to inventory and study historic resources: Good historic preservation practice is founded on comprehensive inventories, deep understanding of history and significance, and documentation of existing conditions. We need to know the extent of the problem and the possibilities. While there is an existing database of historic resources within the Valley, it represents only a first, thin layer of what should be developed and maintained. Modern mapping, photography, and database technologies make it possible to create an excellent inventory, to integrate advance information about historic resources into public decision-making, and to use it for public education as appropriate. Well-organized volunteer and student labor can support much of the work.

Alamosa’s Main Street includes a variety of historic buildings from different periods and in varying styles in a pleasing blend. At left is the San Luis Valley Brewing Co., whose restaurant and brewery are adaptive uses for what was originally a bank building.
• **Provide regional leadership in developing public appreciation, advocacy, technical information, and training to encourage local action:** The heritage area offers an opportunity to develop preservation leadership at the regional scale, where economies of scale and cross-jurisdictional relationships and technology transfer could prove highly beneficial. At the core of the heritage area’s role are encouragement, support, and leadership for local governments and grassroots advocates for preservation initiatives within our communities. The heritage area must build public trust in preservation initiatives. The interpretation program described in this plan offers a “bully pulpit” to reach out to residents. The more authentic resources they can preserve, the more they can explain their stories within a meaningful context. A regionally based organization is well-positioned to develop close working relationships with such knowledgeable advisors as Colorado Preservation, Inc., History Colorado, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation on behalf of local partners. In addition, the heritage area can become the regional historic preservation advocate in the National Heritage Area.

• **Provide technical assistance and financial support:** The heritage area will coordinate and in some cases provide technical assistance and financial support for local preservation initiatives, including both community planning and specific projects. Technical assistance and funding for projects (feasibility studies, market analysis, building assessments, treatment plans) at an early stage can inject important information and momentum into the implementation process. A well-established competitive grants program can have a large impact in providing support for projects, encouraging their development, and providing visible signs of progress and investment in historic preservation. As of this writing, the first heritage-area matching grants drawn from early-action federal funding by the Board of Directors have been awarded to several local historic preservation projects.

**Connecting with Federal and State Initiatives**

As a part of the National Park Service “family,” the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is among the many federal initiatives being undertaken in the vicinity of the San Luis Valley and its adjacent mountains. With its Congressional authorization and support, local nonprofit organization, and partnership structure, the National Heritage Area is in a unique position to help bring federal expertise to local community and grassroots initiatives.

**National Trust for Historic Preservation**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to saving historic places and revitalizing America’s communities. Founded in 1949, the Trust provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to protect the irreplaceable places that tell America’s story. http://www.preservationnation.org/about-us/regionaloffices/mountains-plains/

**History Colorado**

History Colorado is a charitable organization and an agency of the State of Colorado under the Department of Higher Education. History Colorado offers the public access to cultural and heritage resources of Colorado, including statewide museums and special programs for individuals and families; collection stewardship of Colorado’s historic treasures; educational resources for schools, students, and teachers; and services related to preservation, archaeology and history.

History Colorado’s statewide activities support tourism, historic preservation, education, and research. Its Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) serves as the State Historic Preservation Office and administers federal and state preservation programs. These include the National Register of Historic Places, Colorado State Register of Historic Properties, Certified Local Government Program, Preservation Tax Credits, Section 106 compliance, and State Historical Fund grants for preservation and related survey and education programs. http://www.historycolorado.org/

The National Heritage Area will keep abreast of the federal initiatives being undertaken in and around the valley. It will serve as a clearinghouse to local communities and residents for federal projects that relate to the heritage area’s mission and goals. Heritage area staff will provide information on relevant initiatives, understand the processes associated with the initiatives, and communicate with the point of contact for each endeavor. Information on relevant initiatives may be provided as a resource on the heritage area website with links to the federal websites where more information is available.

ACTION: Stay informed about federal initiatives being undertaken in and around the San Luis Valley relating to the heritage area’s mission and
goals. Provide information to local communities and residents and facilitate communication where appropriate.

The National Heritage Area will help bring various federal initiatives together in the interest of local communities and residents. For instance, the Bureau of Land Management may be undertaking archaeological investigations at a historic site within the lands that it manages, while the National Park Service is preparing a National Historic Landmark nomination for a significant landscape or site elsewhere. The National Heritage Area can help relate these separate initiatives, make them available and relevant to local interests, and serve as an intermediary with local residents in order to gain their interest and support.

**ACTION:** Work with federal agencies to relate separate initiatives associated with heritage area interests and to make them available and relevant to local communities and residents.

The heritage area’s enabling legislation authorizes the National Park Service (NPS) to provide technical assistance to the National Heritage Area, which can be realized in a variety of ways. The NPS Intermountain Regional Office and Great Sand Dunes National Park are already deeply involved with and supportive of the heritage area initiative. In addition, employees of many of the other federal agencies associated with the valley, such as the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are local residents and active in local affairs.

National Heritage Area staff and partners will consult on a regular basis with NPS representatives and local federal employees on ways that federal agencies can undertake projects and provide technical assistance and support for heritage area and community goals. The heritage area can be both the entity that seeks and receives such support and the conduit to local partners.

**ACTION:** Actively seek ways for federal agencies to undertake projects and provide technical assistance and support for heritage area and community goals.

#### Related Federal Initiatives

Several federal initiatives are of specific importance to the National Heritage Area and its mission and are described in the following subsections.

**American Latino Heritage Initiative**

In 2011, the National Park Service introduced the American Latino Heritage Initiative to preserve and interpret historic places associated with the nation’s Hispanic and Latino history. In partnership with the National Park Foundation’s American Latino Heritage Fund, the initiative has undertaken a series of projects, including an American Latino Heritage Theme Study, the designation of American Latino landmarks and historic sites, nationwide youth summits, and an online American Latino travel itinerary featuring national parks and historic sites.

The American Latino Heritage Theme Study seeks to elevate the national dialogue on the role of American Latinos in the development of the nation. Led by the National Park Service and a team of Latino scholars, the theme study will play a vital role in helping to identify and evaluate locations relevant to Latino contributions and of historical significance for the National Register of Historic Places and for National Historic Landmark designation. Among the sites researched as potential National Historic Landmarks as part of the initiative are the Trujillo Homesteads and the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant Historic District. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Trujillo Homesteads National Historic Landmark was announced in January 2012.

The National Heritage Area will be a proactive participant in the American Latino Heritage Initiative. Representing one of the nation’s most interesting and significant historic...
Hispano settlements and communities, the heritage area can contribute directly to the initiative’s goals and benefit from its projects.

**ACTION: Actively participate in the American Latino Heritage Initiative. Construct appropriate heritage area projects to be consistent with its goals and to align with its criteria for support.**

Reconnaissance Survey Report

Associated with the American Latino Heritage Initiative, the NPS Intermountain Regional Office prepared a Reconnaissance Survey Report for the San Luis Valley and Sangre de Cristo Mountains to identify opportunities for the preservation and interpretation of nationally significant American Latino heritage sites. Among its recommendations is that Congress authorize preparation of a Special Resource Study of American Latino sites within the San Luis Valley and central Sangre de Cristo Mountains, which would allow for a more complete evaluation of alternatives for protection of these resources. The study would explore alternatives for preservation, interpretation, and visitor experience, including the possibility of stronger programming and affiliation with the National Heritage Area.

Aside from the Special Resource Study, the Reconnaissance Survey Report recommends working with the Sangre de Cristo and Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Areas to develop tours that allow visitors to explore the routes traveled by early Latino explorers and settlers in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Additionally, the report recommends that the NPS provide financial and technical assistance to the two heritage areas to assist local communities and private organizations in inventory, preservation, interpretation, and education initiatives. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area will coordinate with, support, and assist the National Park Service in realizing its recommendations.

**ACTION: Coordinate with, support, and assist the National Park Service in realizing recommendations included in its San Luis Valley and Central Sangre de Cristo Mountains Reconnaissance Survey Report (Working Draft).**

Old Spanish Trail

The National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management are preparing a comprehensive management plan for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, branches of which trace the east and west sides of the San Luis Valley. In addition, studies are being prepared of high-value scenic and cultural landscapes along federally owned portions of the trail. The comprehensive management plan will lay the groundwork for federal assistance with preservation and interpretation. The information being developed through the scenic and cultural landscape studies is valuable not only to identify and protect sites but to understand the history of the period of trail use.
The Old Spanish Trail Association is a private organization committed to the study, preservation, and interpretation of the trail and is a heritage area partner focused upon the San Luis Valley branch. Chapter 7 of this management plan includes recommendations for interpretation of the trail, particularly in conjunction with interpretation along Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway. National Heritage Area partners will work closely with the Old Spanish Trail Association, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management in preservation and interpretive initiatives. In the San Luis Valley, the National Heritage Area and Old Spanish Trail Association will take a proactive role in implementing trail interpretation and preservation.

**ACTION:** Collaborate with the Old Spanish Trail Association, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management in the study, interpretation, and preservation of the Northern Branch of the Old Spanish Trail in the San Luis Valley.

**ACTION:** Encourage completion and implementation of the comprehensive management plan for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

**Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area**

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area is the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s sister to the south. Extending from Albuquerque north to the Colorado border, the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area encompasses diverse contemporary cultures, including the Jicarilla Apaches, eight Pueblo tribes, and the descendants of Spanish colonists who settled the area in 1598. The Rio Grande Valley landscape reflects its long settlement history and is the place from which Hispano settlers in the San Luis Valley migrated. The two national heritage areas have a shared history and cultural affinity as well as shared goals and programmatic interests.

As suggested by the NPS Reconnaissance Survey Report discussed above, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area will maintain an ongoing dialogue with the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area and collaborate where possible on research, preservation, interpretation, and educational initiatives. Collaboration could include extended tour routes as suggested in the Survey Report, participation in other American Latino Heritage Initiatives, and additional mutually supportive projects to preserve traditional cultures and strengthen communities.

**ACTION:** Maintain an ongoing dialogue and collaborate with the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area on projects and initiatives of mutual interest.

**INVENTORY AND STUDY RESOURCES**

Significant information and research has been developed for historic resources within the San Luis Valley, but more needs to be done. Research studies such as *The Culebra River Villages of Costilla County: Village Architecture and Its Historical Context, 1851-1949* (1991), *Hispanic Vernacular Architecture and Settlement Patterns of the Culebra River Villages of Southern Colorado 1850-1950* (1992), subsequent *Culebra River Villages of Costilla County Colorado Multiple Property Submission* (2000), and current *Sangre de Cristo Land Grant Historic District study* (unpublished), provide comprehensive and informative analysis and context for Hispano buildings, landscapes, and culture within the vicinity of San Luis. Such studies help us not only understand what we have, but they also inform development of appropriate preservation initiatives. Realization of the significance of this heritage and the uniqueness of these resources builds community awareness and pride and assists property owners in crafting appropriate treatments for their historic properties.

These research studies need to be continued, further developed, created for other types of resources, and applied to preservation initiatives. The National Heritage Area will be a coordinator and focal point for these activities. The heritage area provides a forum where partners ranging from federal agencies to professional researchers, educational institutions, communities, and avocational historians can coordinate their activities. To do so, the National Heritage Area should organize interested partners; have access to the range of research that has been conducted; assess gaps and research needs; and provide guidance for avenues of future research.

**ACTION:** Establish a group of qualified research advisors to provide guidance to heritage area research activities and initiatives.
ACTION: Establish a research network open to individuals interested in the National Heritage Area’s history through which research information and initiatives can be shared and coordinated.

ACTION: Assemble a bibliography of research studies, publications, and information that can be accessed through the heritage area’s website with links to digitally available studies and information on where other studies can be found.

ACTION: Working with research advisors, establish a research program for the National Heritage Area, identifying research topics, gaps in existing knowledge, research questions, and guidance for research studies that would most benefit the heritage area and its communities.

ACTION: Seek programmatic and funding support for research initiatives on the National Heritage Area’s history.

ACTION: Encourage, facilitate, coordinate, and support research initiatives being undertaken by researchers on the National Heritage Area’s history. Consult with federal and state agencies on research being undertaken or that could be undertaken on the federal and state levels. Consult with local researchers on initiatives they would be interested in undertaking. Provide guidance and support for research in accordance with priorities established in the heritage area’s research program.

Most historic preservation activities are begun through the identification and inventory of historic resources. History Colorado’s Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) manages the statewide inventory and database of historic resources in Colorado. It is important for local resource inventories to be undertaken as part of the statewide database to take advantage of its professional methodology and to assure official recognition. As discussed earlier in the chapter and in Appendix B, more than 2,300 historic buildings and sites have been inventoried within the National Heritage Area. Of these, 37 have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and 16 have been determined eligible for the register but not yet officially listed. OAHP’s online database of historic resources, known as Compass, is available to qualified researchers.

The National Heritage Area will organize the creation of a comprehensive heritage area-wide historic resource inventory in collaboration with Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla counties; towns; federal agencies; and other interested and qualified partners, such as Adams State University. Beginning with information available from OAHP, the locally led historic resource inventory will verify and update existing survey data, add new data using OAHP survey forms and methodology, add new photographic and other information, and compile data using the San Luis Valley GIS database. Historic resources will be available as a distinct GIS layer so that detailed historic resource information may be correlated to and displayed with other GIS data layers such as parcel numbers, natural resources, utilities, etc.
Every building over 50 years of age should be inventoried. Surveys may be compiled over time using trained volunteers from each county and community under the guidance of heritage-area and county staff. Areas of most significance and need should be targeted for first attention. The updated and compiled survey forms and GIS data will be provided to OAHP to update the statewide database. The comprehensive historic resource inventory will be available to county and municipal planners, property owners, developers, researchers, preservation interests, and the general public.

ACTION: Organize the creation of a comprehensive heritage area-wide historic resource inventory using the San Luis Valley GIS database and coordinate with OAHP's statewide historic resource database.

Based upon the existing knowledge of historic resources, existing inventories and research, and new inventories and research as they are developed, identify local and regional areas that should be considered for documentation as cultural landscapes and/or historic districts. Identify opportunities for new context studies and multiple resource thematic inventories. Identify individual buildings and resources and potential historic districts that should be considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Properties and as National Historic Landmarks.

ACTION: Develop ongoing community program of preparing cultural landscape reports, context studies, historic district assessments, and nominations to the National and State Registers for historic resources within the heritage area.

Providing Regional Preservation Leadership

The National Heritage Area is well-positioned to act as a regional preservation leader providing guidance, assistance, and support to heritage area communities for historic preservation. The heritage area's leadership will support community revitalization and the enhancement of community character. Chapter 9, Community Revitalization, discusses ways in which the National Heritage Area will support the revitalization and enhancement of local communities through interpretation and heritage tourism. Historic preservation plays a key role in this program. Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions, addresses ways in which the heritage area will engage residents, especially young people, in initiatives that strengthen the unique cultural traditions of the National Heritage Area. Building community pride and strengthening cultural traditions will increase public recognition of community character and support for historic preservation.

The heritage area offers statewide and national partners a single, regional focus for outreach to communities and property owners, where historic preservation activities must ultimately take place. It similarly offers local governments the benefits of a broader perspective, shared resources, and economies of scale through, for example, regional workshops and training opportunities.

Statewide and National Partnerships

National Heritage Area staff will serve as a regional connection to state and national preservation organizations. Heritage area staff will work closely with History Colorado's Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) and the statewide nonprofit Preservation Colorado, Inc. in their relationships with communities and organizations within the National Heritage Area. Staff will assist local communities and organizations in their relationships with these and other state and national preservation entities. By encouraging such organizations to serve local communities, the heritage area will coordinate outreach and training programs and insure that both building owners and communities have access to advice on best practices drawn from experience around the nation.

ACTION: Serve as a regional connection to state and national preservation organizations on behalf of local communities and organizations within the National Heritage Area.

Among the services the heritage area may provide is help in identifying and organizing programmatic assistance to heritage area communities and organizations available at the state and national levels. The heritage area will encourage local communities to take advantage of state-level resources.
and participate in state-level programs such as the State and National Registers, State Historical Fund, training programs, preservation tax credits, and Certified Local Government Program. Funding is available from several sources for preservation and related education and planning projects including History Colorado’s State Historical Fund, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, CDOT, private foundations, and others.

**ACTION:** Encourage and assist local communities and organizations in identifying and organizing programmatic assistance available at the state and national levels.

**Community Partnerships**

As a regional preservation leader, the National Heritage Area will develop working relationships with community leaders as they establish policies and undertake planning and review processes for new development. Balanced, professional approaches that are respectful of private property rights and different points of view, yet keep the best interests of the community in mind, will be essential. Local heritage area partners should be regular attendees at planning commission and commissioner meetings. Heritage area staff will maintain an ongoing awareness of projects and issues that are coming before community leaders so that the appropriate level of input can be provided as early in planning and review processes as possible.

**ACTION:** Develop working relationships with community leaders regarding planning and review processes that impact historic resources.

**ACTION:** Work with local heritage area partners who are able to attend community planning meetings and participate in the planning process.

**ACTION:** Maintain an ongoing awareness of historic preservation-related projects and issues that are coming before community leaders.

Good planning tools inform good decision-making. The heritage area will develop a program to provide planning tools and technical assistance to counties and towns related to historic preservation and community character. In addition to providing its own expertise and assistance through staff and partners, the National Heritage Area will seek resources, funding, and support from nonprofit, statewide, and national organizations to this end. In undertaking its preservation programming, the heritage area and its partners will coordinate with the State Preservation Plan as developed by History Colorado’s Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP; see sidebar on the following page).

### State Historical Fund

The State Historical Fund was created in 1990 by constitutional amendment allowing limited gaming within the state. The amendment directs that a portion of gaming tax revenues be used for historic preservation throughout the state. Funds are distributed through a competitive grant program managed by History Colorado. All projects must demonstrate strong public benefit and community support. Grants vary in size from a few hundred dollars to amounts in excess of $200,000.

The State Historical Fund assists in a wide variety of preservation projects including restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings, architectural assessments, archeological excavations, designation and interpretation of historic places, preservation planning studies, and educational and training programs. Important projects within the San Luis Valley have benefited tremendously from the State Historical Fund, with over one million dollars in support of historic preservation projects in the City of Alamosa alone since 1998. [http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/state-historical-fund](http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/state-historical-fund)

The historic resource inventory discussed above is a critical first step. Planning tools such as design guidelines, planning charrettes, Main Street concepts, model ordinances, best practices, and successful examples from other places can be helpful in providing guidance to what is possible and appropriate. Additionally, the heritage area will coordinate a program that provides technical assistance and training to communities, especially with respect to planning policy and project planning at the concept stage. The assistance of informed, professional planners and designers will help community leaders to identify options that might not otherwise come to light.

**ACTION:** Seek funding and programmatic assistance from nonprofit, statewide, and national organizations to provide planning resources, training, and assistance to local communities directly or through the National Heritage Area.

**ACTION:** Create a program to assist communities in developing planning tools that will provide guidance for good decision-making with respect to historic preservation and community character.

**ACTION:** Provide technical assistance to communities for planning initiatives and particular projects where appropriate.
The State Historic Preservation Plan

Every five years History Colorado’s Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) updates its statewide preservation plan as a requirement for participation in the federal government’s preservation program as outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (16 USC 470). The mandate specifies that the plan have a statewide focus, contain analysis of the current state of preservation efforts, address all types of historic resources, and coordinate with broader planning efforts.

The State Preservation Plan, titled *The Power and Heritage of Place*, is organized around six goals devised to address these public priorities through statewide, regional, and local preservation efforts (http://www.historycolorado.org/archaeologists/state-preservation-plan). The plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies are relevant to the priorities of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and are highlighted below:

• **GOAL A: Preserving the Places that Matter:** The ongoing identification, documentation, evaluation, protection, and interpretation of Colorado’s irreplaceable historic and cultural resources. Strategies include polling communities as to how to facilitate reconnaissance-level surveys; identifying underrepresented and threatened resources, identifying and documenting new historic contexts; surveying rural communities and cultural landscapes; gathering oral histories; and examining ways to promote designation of eligible resources already surveyed.

• **GOAL B: Strengthening and Connecting the Colorado Preservation Network:** Building the capacity of preservation partners and networks statewide to nurture local leaders and leverage assets. Strategies include creating new and strengthening existing local preservation advocacy organizations; establishing mentor relationships through local leaders; assisting communities with no or inactive preservation programs; identifying non-traditional partners, such as economic development groups, downtown associations, and service organizations; and allying with conservation partners in broadening place-based preservation efforts.

• **GOAL C: Shaping the Preservation Message:** The promotion and messaging of historic preservation’s mission and vision to all citizens. Strategies include demystifying elements of the historic preservation process that may be daunting to local advocates; taking advantage of construction of the new History Colorado Center to promote education and outreach related to historic preservation; and generating additional publicity for local preservation initiatives.

• **GOAL D: Publicizing the Benefits of Preservation:** Documenting and sharing of the benefits of historic preservation. Objectives include advancing heritage tourism efforts by linking historic preservation and heritage tourism’s roles in planning and land use at the state and municipal levels and increasing awareness among local decision makers regarding heritage tourism as an economic development and revitalization tool.

• **GOAL E: Weaving Preservation Throughout Education:** The education of students and citizens of all ages about their shared heritage. Objectives include creating programs to engage youth in understanding and appreciating cultural and historic resources and developing integrated curricula related to historic preservation (i.e. developing an annual historic preservation theme for educational programs statewide to promote breadth of diverse activities; modeling History Colorado’s www.coloradofieldtrip.org initiative and Colorado Preservation, Inc.’s Youth Summit to provide experiential opportunities and pilot programs to school-age children throughout the state; and teaching oral history techniques at the middle-school level).

• **GOAL F: Advancing Preservation Practices:** The provision of historic preservation technical outreach to assist in defining, describing, and preserving Colorado’s historic and cultural resources. Objectives include identifying and increasing traditional building trades and training opportunities such as strengthening the capacity of regional craftspeople capable of rehabilitating historic components; leveraging the State Historical Fund to train craftspeople in the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties; and creating and maintaining a directory of craftspeople.
ACTION: Coordinate preservation programming with OAHP’s State Preservation Plan.

The heritage area will encourage communities to consider and adopt planning processes that strengthen communities and enhance community character. The use of design standards, design overlay districts, and local historic districts as part of zoning and land use ordinances are techniques that encourage property owners and developers to recognize and work with desired local character. They have a proven record in helping to raise property values and encourage new investment. While some communities are hesitant to adopt processes with which they are unfamiliar, gentle persuasion and the successful results that have been achieved in other similar places can help convince them to try new ideas.

ACTION: Encourage communities to consider and adopt planning processes and techniques that strengthen communities and enhance community character.

Perhaps the most important planning tool the heritage area can assist communities with is the development of local preservation and cultural resource plans. Each community participating in the heritage area program will be encouraged to prepare a preservation plan customized to its resources, interests, and capabilities. The National Heritage Area will assist communities in preparing and implementing such plans. Preservation planning may be incorporated into the revitalization strategies discussed in Chapter 9. Preservation plans will be based upon best practice models to be identified by the heritage area and should include:

- Background review and context;
- Review of existing resources;
- Existing conditions and issues;
- Community goals;
- Preservation strategies, recommendations, and actions; and
- Implementation plan.

The heritage area will use an incentive-based approach to community planning and historic preservation. The support and programming outlined above will be offered to communities as incentives but will also come with criteria and requirements for the communities. The National Heritage Area will explore national models of incentive-based programs that would be applicable within its boundaries.

ACTION: Explore national models of incentive-based programs that promote and facilitate historic preservation and strengthening of community character.

Finally, the National Heritage Area partnership will encourage and support a network of preservation advocates within local communities, with heritage area board and staff members serving as active preservation advocates as appropriate. The heritage area’s Board of Directors will regularly address preservation issues that arise and decide what positions and what actions, if any, to take. Whether by board, staff, or partners, preservation advocacy must always be professional and respectful of local community perspectives and differing points of view.

ACTION: Encourage and support a network of preservation advocates within local communities.

ACTION: Heritage area board and staff will be active as preservation advocates under policies and positions determined by the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s Board of Directors.
Providing Technical Assistance and Financial Support for Projects

Most of the recommendations and actions outlined above relate to planning being undertaken by local communities and government entities. Most preservation impacts, however, are felt through individual projects that involve historic buildings and other resources and are initiated by organizations, businesses, and private citizens. In addition to working with the governmental side of historic preservation and community revitalization, the National Heritage Area will also work with the developmental side, including the private sector.

The National Heritage Area coordinating entity will not be directly involved in owning, developing, or managing property because it would overwhelm heritage area staff and distract the coordinating entity from its larger mission. Individual bricks-and-mortar projects should be undertaken by others. However, the National Heritage Area and its partners will be active in encouraging, facilitating, and supporting preservation and rehabilitation projects that revitalize communities and are consistent with preservation standards and guidelines. Such involvement is a part of the approach to community revitalization developed in Chapter 9.

Heritage area staff and partners may support specific projects in a variety of ways. First, they can identify potential projects and bring together entrepreneurs and investors who might be willing to undertake them. Second, they can coordinate, seek funding for, and organize technical assistance for project planning, including building assessments, feasibility studies, marketing analysis, funding strategies, design, and documents and processes needed for the use of federal and state preservation tax credits. They can provide guidance and technical assistance in the design and implementation of projects consistent with historic preservation guidelines and building conservation techniques.

Through partner resources, the heritage area will assemble information on qualified contractors and craftsmen and develop programming to train craftsmen in preservation techniques within the heritage area. It may create a program that provides small grants for emergency stabilization of historic buildings in danger of being lost. A small-scale matching grant program would be appropriate to fund façade and other improvements to historic buildings in downtown areas. Finally, the heritage area will consider creating a revolving loan fund for acquisition of threatened buildings and match them with sympathetic owners willing to undertake their rehabilitation, for which there are many models across the country.

**ACTION:** Work with partners to actively encourage, facilitate, and support bricks-and-mortar preservation and rehabilitation projects that revitalize communities and are consistent with preservation standards and guidelines.

**ACTION:** Help coordinate, seek funding for, and organize technical assistance for the planning and implementation of preservation and rehabilitation projects by partners and the private sector.

**ACTION:** Consider creating a grant program for emergency stabilization of threatened buildings, a small-scale matching grant program for façade and other building improvements, and over the longer term a revolving loan program to promote building rehabilitation.

**ACTION:** Organize workshops and training programs for local contractors and craftsmen to train them in preservation concepts, construction, and materials conservation techniques.
**Chapter 5 • Conservation & Recreation**

**Introduction**

Natural resources are inextricably linked to the significance of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. This beautiful and bountiful landscape, much of it protected, serves as the foundation for the region’s agricultural economy and its tourism and recreational activities. Whether it is the region’s water, soils, wetlands, forest, or dunes, all of these resources interact within a living cultural landscape that continues to evolve over time. This Chapter provides an overview of the natural resource conservation, land stewardship, and recreation programs within the National Heritage Area, and the types of public and private organizations involved in their management. It also describes the challenges associated with resource conservation, and makes recommendations for new and ongoing resource stewardship efforts.

**The Planning Foundation for Conservation and Recreation**

The National Heritage Area’s enabling legislation, the goals developed as we planned for the heritage area, and the scenarios that outlined our strategies form our foundation for planning. Aspects of these documents as they relate to conservation and recreation goals are noted below.

Primary Goal 1 developed for the National Heritage Area relates to conservation and recreation (see sidebar). It emphasizes the development of a vibrant heritage tourism sector that relies upon the conservation of natural resources and recreational development.

From feedback provided in stakeholder workshops conducted on behalf of this management plan, it is clear that several key issues are of particular interest and concern to heritage area residents. Most are related to the fact that while public agencies and nonprofit organization are doing a good job conserving and protecting natural resources, there is a lack of consolidated information on the wide variety of recreational opportunities available, and a lack of clarity as to the boundaries of public lands and the types of recreational activities permitted within them.

**Strategic Objectives for Conservation and Recreation**

The heritage area’s approach related to these issues should be to support and raise public awareness for what other organizations and government agencies are already doing to preserve land, water, and other natural resources, as well as to help communicate what recreational programs and facilities already exist through coordinated marketing.
programs and promotions. The heritage area should also promote environmental education and outreach through landscape-based interpretation and engagement of heritage area youth. There are seven strategic objectives for a well-coordinated heritage area approach to land stewardship, natural resources, and outdoor recreation:

• **Forge close ties and partnerships with federal, state, and regional land stewardship entities:** The heritage area can partner with and support stewardship, recreation, and land conservation initiatives led by these agencies and organizations. It can also encourage their continuing collaboration on "big picture" approaches and cooperative programming, and serve as a supporting resource on developing opportunities, improving facilities, and undertaking best practices.

• **Build public awareness through interpretation:** While the cultural dimensions of this remarkable environment are significant, identifying and interpreting these dimensions are not necessarily the focus of public and private land-managing agencies. The heritage area can enable land stewardship entities, visitors, and residents to better understand human associations with the region’s natural resources within the context of the heritage area’s interpretive themes.

• **Build visibility of existing opportunities and encourage public access:** The heritage area can encourage public access through making more complete information available and easily accessible to residents and visitors; encouraging eco-tourism initiatives and other outdoor recreation programming offered by organizations, clubs, and private providers; and helping to improve existing public access facilities.

• **Encourage public access through recreation-related business development:** The heritage area can encourage interaction with the natural environment by promoting recreation-related business development and eco-tourism entrepreneurship.

• **Support planning and development of local and regional recreational trail networks:** The heritage area can support local and regional trail and interpretive initiatives by working with local and county governments to encourage additional trail planning and development, particularly in areas where visitor services are already provided, or where trails will complement heritage tourism initiatives.

• **Support watershed restoration efforts:** The heritage area needs to play a supportive role in promoting watershed restoration efforts and educational initiatives. Where possible, it also needs to play a leadership role in coordinating interpretation of water resources within the broader context of the region’s cultural heritage. Opportunities also exist for the heritage area to promote the development of water-oriented recreational opportunities – both physical and programmatic – to include water and river tourism-related business development.

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**The National Heritage Area’s Enabling Legislation**

The need for conservation initiatives and recreational opportunities is established in Public Law 111-11 (Subtitle A, Section VIII). Summarized in Chapter 1, the enabling legislation makes specific reference to conservation of the heritage area’s unique natural resources and its recreational opportunities, including the following language drawn from Sec. 8001(c) and (d):

- Developing recreational and educational opportunities in the heritage area;
- Increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources of the heritage area; and
- Recommend policies and strategies for resource management that consider and detail the application of appropriate land and water management techniques, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area.

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The southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) is a small passerine bird placed on the federal Endangered Species list in 1995. The Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge protects riverine and wetland areas supporting the densely vegetated habitat favored by these tiny birds.
Monitor Solar Energy Zones Development Initiatives: Within the Heritage Area, three sites in BLM ownership (totaling 15,244 acres) have been identified as Solar Energy Zones (SEZs), or sites suitable for large-scale solar energy development. As this type of large-scale development and corresponding transmission corridors have the potential to impact the cultural landscape and its associated historic, agricultural, natural, and visual resources, it is important that the Heritage Area remain informed about the ongoing Environmental Impact Studies and development proposals and work to ensure that negative impacts are mitigated.

Forge Close Ties and Partnerships with Federal, State, and Regional Land Stewardship Entities

Due to the vast amount of acreage owned and managed by the federal government, the broader context for conservation and recreation planning, policy, and action within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is greatly influenced by the U.S. Department of the Interior. In total, federal lands comprise approximately 35 percent (1,237 square miles) of the heritage area. These include the Rio Grande National Forest (the largest single landholding within the heritage area) and three National Wilderness Areas managed by the U.S. Forest Service; the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve managed by the National Park Service; and three National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Alamosa NWR, Monte Vista NWR, and Baca NWR. With the exception of the Baca NWR, all allow public access and have established trail systems.

More than one-third of the federal lands within the heritage area are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Within the heritage area, these 224,000 acres are managed by the BLM’s San Luis Valley Field Office in Saguache (BLM CBB, 27). BLM lands are managed primarily for recreation, natural resource conservation, wildlife habitat conservation, and rangeland allotments. Almost all of BLM’s 52 rangeland allotments within the heritage area are designated and managed for grazing of livestock. The majority of BLM land is found in Conejos County and is located on the west side of the valley just below the foothills of the San Juan Mountains. A large assemblage also comprises much of the San Luis Hills and the western edge of the Rio Grande. Within Alamosa County, BLM lands encompass the Blanca Wetlands, the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and the salt flats south of the Great Sand Dunes National Park, as well as low-lying lands that border the southeast corner of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.

Special designations apply to several assemblages, which guide the use and management of BLM lands. These include:

- Rio Grande River Corridor (4,644 acres); Recreational and Scenic Value
- Ra Jadero Canyon (3,633 acres); Ecological Value
- Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area (8,676 acres); Ecological and Recreational Value
- Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad (3,868 acres); Historic and Scenic Value
- Los Mogotes (31,309 acres); Ecological Value
- San Luis Hills/Flattop (39,421 acres); Scenic Value. A portion of this ACEC is designated a Wilderness Study Area.

Conservation and Recreation Goals for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Primary Goal 1: Support development of a vibrant heritage tourism sector that stimulates preservation, economic development, and community revitalization. In particular:

Goal 1-1, Land Stewardship and Natural Resources: Partner with and support the work of organizations working to protect the land, agriculture, and natural resources of the region, as a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape and as a critical contributor to regional economic health.

Goal 1-2, Outdoor Recreation: Sustain, enhance, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities as a means of stimulating heritage tourism and as a significant element of our heritage.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Approximately 91,553 acres of BLM land within the heritage area have been designated as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). An ACEC designation highlights areas where special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural and scenic values; fish, wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes; or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards. The designation is a record of significant values that must be accommodated when BLM considers future management actions and land use proposals. Congress mandated the designation of ACECs through the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) to manage areas containing truly unique and significant resource values (BLM Guidelines, 1-2). There are seven ACECs within the heritage area. All were originally designated in 1991 and are currently managed under the San Luis Resource Area Resource Management Plan. These include:

- Rio Grande River Corridor (4,644 acres); Recreational and Scenic Value
- Ra Jadero Canyon (3,633 acres); Ecological Value
- Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area (8,676 acres); Ecological and Recreational Value
- Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad (3,868 acres); Historic and Scenic Value
- Los Mogotes (31,309 acres); Ecological Value
- San Luis Hills/Flattop (39,421 acres); Scenic Value. A portion of this ACEC is designated a Wilderness Study Area.
The Rio Grande Natural Area was established by the Rio Grande Natural Area Act in 2006 in order to conserve, restore, and protect natural, historic, cultural, scientific, scenic, wildlife, and recreational resources of the natural area. Stretching 33 miles, its boundaries include the Rio Grande, from the southern boundary of the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge to the New Mexico state line, plus lands extending one quarter of a mile on either side of the river bank. The BLM manages 22 miles of the Natural Area on the Conejos County side and up to the high water mark on the Costilla side. Planning is underway to develop complementary management plans for both federal and non-federal lands (though management recommendations are voluntary for private landowners). Development of the RGNA's management plans is advised by a nine-member Commission appointed by the Secretary of the Interior (http://www.rgwcd.org/page24.html), which is working with the BLM to develop a plan for the area that incorporates outreach and recommendations for private lands as well as the BLM.

seven Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (areas where special management attention is needed to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important resources), three Special Recreation Management Areas where outdoor recreation is a high priority (the Rio Grande Corridor, Zapata Falls, and Blanca Wetlands), and the Rio Grande Natural Area, for which the Rio Grande Natural Area Commission is developing a plan to work with private landowners and the BLM for working together to enhance and protect the river corridor.

State lands managed by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources comprise an additional 4.5 percent (156 square miles) of the heritage area. These include the San Luis Lakes State Park, which has well-developed swimming, fishing, and picnic facilities, and 13 State Wildlife Areas (SWAs) managed by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Comprising more than 22,000 acres, SWAs occupy the niche of providing wildlife-related recreation. In addition, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife manages 11 State Trust Lands (STL) lease areas and one State Fishing Unit (SU) within the heritage area, which total more than 78,000 acres; the largest is the La Jara Reservoir with more than 36,000 acres. Through a partnership between the Parks and Wildlife and the State Land Board, public access is provided to these lands for a specified time during the year for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-related activities. These lands may also have several lease activities occurring on them during the year, which may include farming, livestock grazing, mining, and logging.

A number of municipal and county recreational initiatives and resources also complement these state and federal lands. The largest municipal parks within the heritage area include Cole Park and the Alamosa Wildlife Refuge, both located within Alamosa County along the Rio Grande. Recently, the City of Alamosa also purchased a historic ranch on its urban edge that is now partly accessible for public recreation. The city is planning greater accessibility through the construction of a western pedestrian bridge crossing near Adams State University. Costilla County, which lacks the large assemblages of public land found within Conejos and Alamosa counties, has developed a major county-wide plan for trails, recreation, and open space with assistance from the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program.
Figure 5-1: Conservation Lands & Recreational Amenities within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.
Within the publicly owned lands described in this section, visitors can participate in a wide variety of recreational activities, including hiking, camping, biking, climbing, boating, picnicking, fishing, hunting, bird watching, and photography. In some areas, the use of the motorized recreational vehicles, such as snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) is permitted. In some limited cases, such as within the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, guided tours and special programs provide opportunities for visitors to learn about these resources through a more structured educational experience.

Federal public agencies participating in this process are justly proud of their collaboration, which is encouraged under the Department of the Interior’s “Service First” policy but not always well implemented in other locations where the lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the National Park Service are found in such complex proximity. This has enabled them to share staff for public outreach and education – but even so, with constrained governmental budgets, they are hampered in serving the public’s thirst for access and education. They must first tend to managing the vast public lands under their care. Volunteers have met some of the need – for example, tending visitor centers at the Monte Vista and Alamosa wildlife refuges on weekends during spring, summer, and fall; otherwise, these facilities are closed.

Even with exemplary collaboration among federal agencies, the number of different agencies responsible for managing these vast and diverse lands for their own specific purposes makes it difficult to perceive a “big picture” view of agency initiatives, conservation lands, and their associated recreational opportunities. This difficulty is even greater for visitors who are unfamiliar with the region and its resources.
ACTION: Work with conservation and land stewardship partners to promote public awareness of stewardship and conservation through interpretive and educational programs outlined in Chapters 6 and 7.

ACTION: Coordinate with federal and state agencies managing public lands and the Adams State University outdoor recreation program on recreational opportunities and programming within the heritage area. Serve as a supporting resource on developing opportunities, enhancing facilities, and implementing best practices.

ACTION: Coordinate the heritage area’s programs with the U.S. Department of the Interior's America's Great Outdoors initiatives as they emerge in the San Luis Valley and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The “San Luis Valley Great Outdoors” initiative is the Valley’s local interpretation of the President’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative.

BUILD PUBLIC AWARENESS THROUGH INTERPRETATION

As stated in Chapter 7, Interpretation, the valley’s landscape is the setting and context for all of its interpretive themes. The region’s rugged landscapes are particularly well suited to interpreting the theme entitled “A High Desert Valley,” which focuses on the heritage area’s unique natural history.

**National Wildlife Refuges**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages approximately 112,000 acres of land within the northern portion of heritage area. These lands include the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge along the east bank of the Rio Grande; the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, which lies mostly within Rio Grande County; and the Baca National Wildlife Refuge, which borders the Sand Dunes National Park to the north and west. Most of the Baca NWR is located in Saguache County. The refuges in their totality are a part of the National Heritage Area, regardless of the county in which they are found.

The **Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge** contains approximately 14,800 acres along the far western edge of the heritage area. Starting in 1952, a series of water works were created there to restore some of the wetlands that were common throughout the valley when it was first settled. Each spring and fall, approximately 20,000 migrating sandhill cranes along with large numbers of migrating waterfowl use the refuge as a major stopping point. This migration is one of the San Luis Valley’s greatest spectacles and is celebrated every spring in early March at the Monte Vista Crane Festival. A self-guided driving trail with some wayside exhibits and wildlife viewing areas offer visitors an opportunity to learn about the refuge’s wetlands and many wild inhabitants.

The **Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge** contains more than 12,000 acres of wetlands within the floodplain of the Rio Grande. Meadows, river oxbows, and riparian corridors support high species diversity and create ideal conditions for viewing waterfowl, songbirds, and other wildlife. The USFWS maintains two trails that provide views of the wetlands, the Rio Grande Nature Trail and Bluff Nature Trail, which are self-guided with some wayside exhibits.

The **Baca National Wildlife Refuge** contains approximately 85,000 acres comprising desert shrublands, grasslands, wet meadows, playa wetlands, and riparian areas. Fed primarily by melting mountain snow, numerous streams flow across the refuge providing an abundance of life in an otherwise arid landscape. The Refuge is home to a large number of wildlife and plant species. In addition to the plant and animal resources contained on the refuge, the area also is rich in historic and cultural resource sites, some of which date over 12,000 years ago. The Refuge abuts lands owned or controlled by other conservation entities including The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the National Park Service (NPS), and the Colorado State Land Board. This complex of lands, totaling more than 500,000 acres, contains one of the largest and most diverse assemblages of wetland habitats remaining in Colorado. The Baca National Wildlife Refuge is currently closed to public access. Environmental assessments area currently ongoing in response to oil and gas exploration claims by Lexam Explorations, which owns subsurface mineral rights below a portion of the property (http://www.fws.gov/alamosa/BacaNWR.html).
and resources. Likewise, “Land of the Blue Sky People” relates to Ute Indian associations with the San Luis Valley, and human prehistoric use and reliance upon its plants, animals, water, and geology. National Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, and the Rio Grande Natural Area are particularly relevant to these themes as they are mandated by law to be preserved in their natural condition. The three designated Wilderness Areas within the heritage area are the South San Juan Wilderness Area, the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness Area, and the Great Sand Dunes Wilderness Area, which borders the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness Area on the west and is entirely within the bounds of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (see sidebar for more information).

Wilderness Study Areas (WSA), which are lands under consideration for addition to the National Landscape Conservation System, include the San Luis Hills Area WSA in the southern portion of the heritage area, the Great Sand Dunes WSA adjacent to the existing Great Sand Dunes Wilderness Area, and the Papa Keal WSA south of the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Until Congress makes a final determination on adding these WSAs to the National Wilderness Preservation System, the federal government will continue to manage these areas to preserve their suitability for designation as wilderness. All these lands help make it possible to understand how Native Americans (especially the Tewa, Hopi, Navajo, Jicarilla, and Ute) and early settlers would have seen the landscape, and relied upon it for hunting and fishing for food, fur, and skins.

The Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust and others have worked successfully for many years with property owners to protect private lands voluntarily in the entire watershed through conservation easements. These lands, along with the National Wildlife Refuges and State Wildlife Areas and other lands protected by The Nature Conservancy, protect significant habitat along the westernmost edge of the nation’s Central Flyway, with more to come in voluntary partnership with private landowners thanks to recent conservation planning for the refuges. The state of Colorado recently issued a significantly improved version of a statewide birding guide with two birding trails (Sandhill and Blanca) located within the heritage area (http://www.coloradobirdingtrail.com). Although most notable for sandhill cranes, the region possesses a wide variety of birdlife, wildlife, and vegetation with an abundance of rare and endangered species, thanks to a wide range of ecological niches within one geographic region, which can be interpreted through “A High Desert Valley.”

The development of early trails, roads, railroads, mineral exploration, and water control facilities, which relate to “Interwoven Peoples and Traditions,” provide equal
opportunity to interpreting human use, exploitation, and adaptation of these natural resources throughout the valley’s settlement history. Certainly these adaptations are embodied within landscapes such as the Rio Grande National Forest and BLM holdings, many of which have continuously been managed to serve the energy, timber, and water resource needs of the region for well over a century. Hundreds of miles of irrigation canals further serve to interpret this history. Hispano culture likewise has been influenced by this unique natural environment. In particular, agricultural practices, ethnic foods, and building traditions have all evolved within the context of local resource abundance and scarcity.

The heritage area has an important leadership role to play in helping the public understand the cultural values and historical uses associated with these natural resources. This can be achieved by working with partners to recognize the cultural values attributed to their properties, and working with them to convey these values through interpretive presentations.

**ACTION:** As outlined in Chapter 7, undertake a comprehensive program for enhanced interpretation of the National Heritage Area’s natural landscape in partnership with state and federal agencies featuring publicly owned lands. (This is expected to include the development of a multimedia approach involving landscape guides and exhibits, site interpretation, driving tours and themed itineraries, and digital content.)

**ACTION:** Work with conservation and land stewardship organizations in helping them realize the significance of historic and cultural features associated with the properties they are preserving. Assist with and help facilitate appropriate treatments and/or presentations of historic and cultural resources on conserved properties.

**BUILD VISIBILITY OF EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES AND ENCOURAGE PUBLIC ACCESS**

A critical market for the heritage area is heritage visitors who greatly enjoy opportunities to be physically active. Marketing for the heritage area should blend messages about great opportunities to experience the unique natural resources of the region with logistical information about public access. Much more can be done to promote awareness of the vast acreage of existing public lands and wide variety of recreational opportunities already available.

For instance, existing recreational opportunities include hundreds of miles of trails, dozens of campsites and picnic facilities, boat launches, hunting and fishing sites, and countless places for nature photography. In addition to the dunes themselves and the full visitor services and interpretive media featured at its visitor center, the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve also manages the Piñon Flats Campground containing 88 developed sites with vehicular access, six primitive campsites, several day-use picnic areas, and dozens of miles of hiking trails. The most popular hikes include the Sand Ramp Trail, Upper Sand Creek Trail, Montville/Mosca Pass Trail, the Medano Lake Trail, and Music Pass Trail.

Self-guided interpretive trail excursions are also available at both the Alamosa and Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuges. In addition to the swimming and boating opportunities available at the San Luis Lakes State Park, there are 51 modern campground sites with electrical hookups, sheltered tables, and fire grills. Hundreds of miles of backcountry trails can also be found within the Rio Grande National Forest, as well as campsites, picnic areas, boat areas, and fishing areas. Other privately conserved lands, such as the Nature Conservancy’s Medano-Zapata Ranch, also offer unique recreational ranching opportunities (see sidebar).
Beyond simply promoting existing recreational facilities, however, the heritage area can also work with conservation partners to further promote the careful development of emerging recreational opportunities, such as those being targeted for development within Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs). Within the heritage area the BLM manages approximately 16,667 acres of its land as SRMAs – a designation intended to intensify management of areas where outdoor recreation is a high priority. This designation helps direct recreation program priorities toward areas with high resource values, elevated public concern, or significant amounts of recreational activity. Areas with a SRMA designation can be expected to see investments in recreation facilities and visitor services aimed at reducing resource damage and mitigating user conflicts.

Existing designations within the heritage area include the Rio Grande Special Recreation Management Area, the Zapata Falls Special Recreation Management Area, and the Blanca Wetlands Special Recreation Management Area. The Blanca Wetlands SRMA, which already has an extensive trail network, provides abundant opportunities to view a highly diverse wetland ecosystem. Initiatives are underway to expand the boundaries of federal protection through conservation easements. Recreational opportunities at the Zapata Falls SRMA have recently been expanded to provide a developed camp site, a picnic area, primitive camp sites, and a four-mile hiking trail to Zapata Lake (located within the Sangre de Cristo National Wilderness Area). The Rio Grande SRMA is currently striving to balance recreational use and demand with the protection of sensitive natural resources.

Recreational clubs active in the San Luis Valley and other organizations, such as the Friends of the Great Sand Dunes National Park, could be encouraged to collaborate with local outfitters and guides and programs of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife to present special opportunities to experience the backcountry. Planning for public access must take account of the special experiences of solitude and quiet that are available now and seek to prevent overcrowding.

The issues identified during management planning – notably a lack of consolidated information on the wide variety of recreational opportunities available and a lack of clarity as to the boundaries of public lands and the types of recreational activities permitted within them – suggest a vigorous effort is needed to address visitors’ (and residents’) access to information. The simple federal “public lands information centers” (in reality these are offices housing BLM and USFS staff) outside La Jara and Monte Vista and the equally modest visitor centers at the Monte Vista and Alamosa national wildlife refuges do not match the quality of the resources themselves. The refuge visitor centers, moreover, are as out of the way as the refuges themselves, so that they do...
not offer useful locations for the long-term expansion that might be possible.

Improving the current state of affairs requires further study, and could take varying forms and phases. Developing a carefully orchestrated suite of communications materials would provide an opportunity to assess needs and build dialogue among the public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the National Heritage Area about meeting those needs. Modern “apps,” websites, and other digital approaches would also be useful, although given the difficulties with fully providing access to digital technology in the heritage area, this phase may not be possible for a few more years.

A full-blown visitor center with orientation exhibits and educational facilities could ultimately prove useful. Such a facility should be located well away from the national park, which currently serves this purpose in the absence of a facility more broadly addressing recreational access and natural resources across the valley. It would preferably be located not with the resources themselves – avoiding risk of adverse environmental impacts – but in a well-sited commercial area, so that the economic benefits from such an investment could be maximized. An example of such a center, sited in such a way, can be found in Moab, Utah, near several national parks (see sidebar).

ACTION: Work with federal and state public agencies, local governments, and other nonprofits to help establish improved information about

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**City of Moab Information Site (Example)**

The City of Moab is located along the Colorado River and near several of Utah’s most important public lands, including Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park, and Dead Horse Point State Park. It also serves as the junction point for three state scenic byways. Serving as the primary gateway community to all these attractions, the City of Moab draws thousands of visitors each year from all over the world in search of unique outdoor recreational experiences. Several federal land-managing agencies sponsored the construction of the Moab visitor center with the local tourism and visitor bureau. The facility is located off federal lands and in the center of town, where its economic impact and access to visitors is greatest.

The Moab visitor center and its official online tourism information site provide a comprehensive overview of visitor services and available recreational activities. In addition to featured information on the parks, it also includes suggested sites and itineraries for rafting, mountain biking, hiking, driving tours, bird watching, etc. It also features upcoming programs and events, as well as links to local guides and outfitters. A comprehensive collection of online brochures are also available to guide visitors to local sites and provide them with themed trail maps (hiking, biking, horseback riding, etc.), self-guided auto tour routes, and other nearby excursions. (http://www.discovermoab.com)
The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail

The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, established in 1978, is a 3,100-mile trail that follows the Continental Divide along the Rocky Mountains and traverses five U.S. states—Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. Called the “King of Trails,” it is the longest and most challenging long-distance trail within the National Trails System. Within the heritage area, the trail passes through the South San Juan Wilderness and San Juan Mountains within western Conejos County.

The Nature Conservancy and the Medano Zapata Ranch

The Nature Conservancy’s ownership of the Medano Zapata Ranch conserves one of the largest cattle ranches in Colorado and provides unique recreation and interpretation opportunities. The Zapata Ranch site represents the history of land ownership and use as it changed from Hispano sheep ranching to Anglo cattle ranching. Today the 103,000-acre bison and guest ranch is managed through a partnership with the Duke and Janet Phillips Family—a third-generation ranching family.

The site includes the historic Zapata ranch headquarters building and bunkhouse. Both log structures have been remodeled to incorporate an indoor dining area and lodging for ranch guests. An old barn has also been converted to an education center and meeting room. The Nature Conservancy offers working cattle ranch vacations, interpretive tours, horseback riding, photography workshops, and guided hikes. An interpretive trail with waysides provides information about ranch lands and is open to the public along State Highway 150.

access to public lands to inform visitors of available recreational resources and programs throughout the heritage area.

ACTION: Assess the feasibility of establishing a well-appointed orientation center focusing on public lands, natural resources and the cultural landscape, environmental education, and recreational opportunities in the San Luis Valley.

ACTION: Work with partners to develop and maintain a comprehensive map and listing of publicly accessible lands and recreational sites and amenities. Ensure that this information is available in print form and electronically via the heritage area’s website.

ACTION: Develop a corps of local guides who can lead visitors on backcountry hikes and other outings of varying lengths and degrees of difficulty. Consider permitting requirements each agency may have different requirements depending on compensation for guide services, participation fees, risk and duty of care, public advertising, and other special resource considerations.

ACTION: Work with partners to develop a local guide training program, with particular focus on recruiting young people.

ACTION: Promote existing recreational opportunities and events, including a listing of guides, local outfitters, campgrounds, and other small recreation-related businesses.

ENCOURAGE PUBLIC ACCESS THROUGH RECREATION-RELATED BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Sustaining, enhancing, and promoting outdoor recreation are important activities in developing a vibrant heritage tourism sector within the National Heritage Area, one of the goals cited at the beginning of this chapter. The heritage area can play a leadership role in encouraging the development of recreation-related businesses and eco-tourism entrepreneurship, by:

- Organizing meetings with public conservation and land stewardship agencies, nonprofit education and advocacy organizations, existing eco-tourism business owners, and recreation clubs where participants can help to identify existing and future visitor recreation service needs and opportunities; and
- Sponsoring partners’ workshops specifically targeted to the eco-tourism and recreation-related business
industry, such as providing examples of model business plans, offering training on business plan development, providing targeted eco-tourism marketing research, and examining small-business loans and financing options.

The San Luis Valley Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is ideally situated to provide the background research and small-business development assistance to aspiring entrepreneurs.

A possible model for one type of program to support recreation-related business development is the Colorado Creative Industries Summit 2012, a kind of exposition and conference or trade show that pulled together artist-entrepreneurs, owners of creative sector businesses, nonprofit cultural workers, and emerging “creatives” to explore the central theme, “Cultivating Common Ground.” The first day consisted of several small discussion groups that addressed core questions around the theme of ‘common ground.’ The second day of the summit consisted of presentations by successful entrepreneurial creatives, as well as professional development sessions. Live music, special performances, and networking opportunities were built into the event. (http://www.coloradoarts.state.co.us/programs/summit/index.html) In the National Heritage Area’s case, a recreation expo could also include programs for the public to learn about what the National Heritage Area has to offer in the way of recreation. Such an expo might focus only on recreation, or it could also include the arts and agriculture, two other sectors with high potential for economic development (addressed in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions).

**ACTION:** Encourage partners to offer small-business development training, workshops, and/or conferences to local residents interested in eco-tourism and recreation-related entrepreneurship.

**ACTION:** Promote recreational and eco-tourism opportunities through heritage area marketing materials and promotional literature.

**ACTION:** Seek collaborative opportunities with eco-tourism initiatives offered by organizations, clubs, and private providers.

**Support Planning and Development of Local and Regional Recreational Trail Networks**

While hundreds of miles of trails abound in the heritage area, most are located far from communities. While these provide opportunities for viewing the natural history and splendor of the region, their relatively remote locations make access difficult for visitors who are unfamiliar with the valley or elderly visitors who do not have the capability to meet the physical challenges associated with wilderness trails. Parents with young children also are less inclined to venture into remote areas.

Those that are located within and near communities offer easily accessible recreational opportunities, such as those within Alamosa’s Cole Park, but are self-contained within the park’s boundaries and do not connect to a larger network. The same is true of the other easily accessible trails within the heritage area, including the two-mile trail that runs along the Rio Grande within the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge and the paved trails found within the San Luis Lakes State Park.

Investments made in both local and regional trail networks can provide greater outdoor recreational opportunities to visitors and local residents. Some work toward such linkages is already underway. For instance, Costilla County is currently in the process of undertaking a “Trails, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan” study, which is being funded by grants from the National Parks Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) and by Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). Among other objectives, this plan is intended to create a blueprint for a multi-use trail system to connect Costilla County’s cultural...
Alamosa Ranch

The Alamosa Ranch is a 1,300-acre parcel located on the northwest edge of Alamosa’s city limits. The City of Alamosa purchased this property in 1997 with funds from its Water Enterprise Fund and the General Fund for two primary reasons: to acquire the water rights associated with the property, and to use it as a source for soil that was needed for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build the levee on the west side of the Rio Grande. Today, the property consists of natural riparian areas, ponds and wetlands, agricultural pastures and fields, and associated farm buildings and structures. Over the last century Alamosa Ranch has supported row crops, hay, dairy, and cattle production. Exemplifying this historic land use is a historic dairy farm that has been located on the property for more than 100 years (Design Concepts, 5). There are currently eight miles of trails on the ranch and additional trails area planned, although studies are still ongoing and a formal master plan for the ranch is now in progress. There is strong public opinion that the environmental resources of the ranch should be protected and that public access also be enhanced to allow for expanded recreational and educational opportunities.

The Costilla County Trails, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan

Costilla County envisions a system of trails, recreation resources, and protected lands and water systems that represent the unique natural and cultural heritage of the county to benefit its residents and visitors. In addition to creating a network of trails, the plan also seeks to create recreational spaces and opportunities in public areas and/or private lands in order to provide different recreational experiences to promote healthy and active lifestyles. Other primary objectives include conserving strategic parcels of land that protect scenic view sheds, unique natural resources, trail corridors, historic structures, agricultural operations and associated water rights, wildlife habitat, and culturally significant places.

Rio Grande Regional Trails Plan

With encouragement from Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors regional planning effort is being spearheaded by the Council of Governments and involves up to 70 stakeholder groups. An example of a collaborative approach among all land-managing agencies (federal, state, and local), the first step in this initiative is to update a decades-old master plan for trails throughout the valley.

The City of Alamosa is working to expand access to the Rio Grande with a second footbridge near Adams State University. The levee that protects the city from flooding forms a natural trail route, and the city has purchased land across the river for additional recreational opportunities.

and community resources with recreational resources. Other local initiatives include the development of a more extensive trail and interpretive network for the Alamosa Ranch, a 1,300-acre parcel containing open space, woods, and wildlife habitat bordering the Rio Grande River on the north side of Alamosa. San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLVGO) coalition is another valley-wide initiative that is working to develop various plans and trail projects throughout the region.

The heritage area can support local and regional trail and interpretive initiatives by advocating the heritage tourism and recreational goals of the plan that these trails support. The heritage area can also work with local and county governments, and in particular the SLVGO coalition, to encourage additional trail planning and development, particularly in areas where visitor services are already provided, or where trails will complement heritage tourism initiatives.

ACTION: Support development of local recreational trail initiatives, including a more extensive trail and interpretive network on the Alamosa Ranch and the implementation of the Costilla County trails plan currently under development.

ACTION: Work with county and local governments to encourage communities to undertake trail plans, particularly where they can promote heritage tourism and environmental education goals.

ACTION: Support the regional efforts of the SLVGO as they work to update the “Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan” of 1996.
to expand public access along the river for trails, fishing, and boat access.

ACTION: Support efforts to create a corridor of conservation easements on private lands along the Rio Grande, as may be possible.

ACTION: Promote existing and planned trail projects through heritage area media outlets. Work with partners to advertise special trail events and educational programs, as well as trail planning studies.

Support Watershed Restoration Efforts

As discussed in Chapter 2, Natural Resources, the heritage area is part of the Rio Grande Basin – a highly diverse and complex hydrologic system that is defined by interdependencies among the region’s topography, geology, surface water, underground aquifers, artesian wells, and irrigation canals. Since the mid-19th century, increased demand and consumption has caused depletion of ground water resources, reductions in the flow volumes of above-ground water resources, and degradation of water quality. Colorado water law and the Rio Grande Compact among Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas dictate water distribution, and many agencies within the San Luis Valley, such as the Rio Grande Water Conservation District and the Rio Grande Basin Round Table, play a key role in managing water reserves (see sidebars).

As water is the most critical resource within the heritage area, water conservation has gained ever-increasing focus over the past several decades. This focus has occasioned dedicated efforts and partnerships among state and federal agencies, city and county officials, local environmental advocacy groups, businesses, landowners, farmers, and ranchers. Much progress has been made in identifying projects, policies, and educational initiatives needed to support watershed restoration efforts.

The Rio Grande Water Conservation District

The mission of the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (RGWCD) is to enhance and protect the water rights of the citizens in the San Luis Valley who reside within the boundaries of the district. The district was created by the Colorado General Assembly and formed in 1967 by a vote of the people residing within its boundaries. It was created to protect, enhance, and develop water resources in the Rio Grande Basin. The district encompasses a five-county region (Alamosa, Rio Grande, Conejos and portions of Saguache and Mineral within the basin).

The RGWCD is a corporate body and a political subdivision. It is governed by a Board of Directors who are appointed for three-year terms by each of the San Luis Valley Board of County Commissioners within the district. County commissioners appoint two directors from each county, with the exception of Mineral County which appoints only one. In order to accomplish its mission, the RGWCD is authorized to levy a property tax on all real property located within the district and collect fees, assessments, and surcharges. In addition, RGWCD is also authorized to contract with federal, state and local agencies, and individuals. The District plays a number of roles in the San Luis Valley, and among other initiatives, has been instrumental in the development of the Rio Grande Natural Area (http://www.rgwcd.org/).

The Rio Grande Basin Round Table

The Rio Grande Interbasin Roundtable (RGRT) was established in 2006 through HB 05-1177 as one of nine basin roundtables in each of the river basins in Colorado and in the Denver metro area. The roundtables were created to facilitate continued discussions within and between basins on water management issues, and to encourage locally driven collaborative solutions to water supply challenges. Comprised of local community members, some of whom are knowledgeable of water matters and others who are be introduced to the issues through the roundtable process, the RGRT has considered the issues facing the Rio Grande Basin, including Rio Grande Compact Compliance, drawdown of aquifers, reservoirs that are not able to store at their designed capacities, continuing drought conditions, and the possible effects of climate change.
restore, protect, and maintain the hydrologic health of the Rio Grande watershed.

Much of this progress can be attributed to the “Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project.” Originating in 2001, this study focused on 91 miles of the Rio Grande, from the town of South Fork in Rio Grande County to the Alamosa/Conejos County line. It assessed conditions of the river and riparian area, identified causes of decline in river health, and provided recommendations for restoration (RGWRSP, 4). Since that time, the Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan (2004), which encompasses the entire Rio Grande watershed within Colorado, has been developed to implement recommendations identified in the 2001 study (see sidebar).

In addition to the 2001 study and 2004 strategic plan, a multitude of other initiatives has been undertaken by public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private institutions to oversee and influence water use, conservation, and education within the watershed. Many governmental agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Colorado Division of Water Resources, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Rio Grande Water Conservation District (the local water policy-making body for the entire San Luis Valley), there are also five conservancy districts within the heritage area. These are Alamosa River-La Jara Creek, San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District

The San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District (SLVWCD) represents Alamosa, Rio Grande, and Saguache counties. It was organized and is operated pursuant to Colorado’s Water Conservancy Act of 1937 (Colorado Revised Statutes § 37-45-101, et seq.). The SLVWCD is responsible for managing the release of water from the Rio Grande Reservoir, located in Hinsdale County, equal to the sum of all obligations (or the sum of the individual “consumptive uses,” which include domestic, agricultural, and industrial use) so that the amount of groundwater taken out from wells is the same amount put back in.

The district is overseen by a ten-member board of directors appointed by the Colorado Water Court. (http://slvwcdco1.qwestoffice.net/401.html) The San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District served as the lead agency for the 2001 Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project and launched the Rio Grande Headwaters Foundation, which now houses and is implementing the project.

Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project

The Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project is an ongoing implementation of the 2004 Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan. The goal of the Rio Grande Headwaters Restoration Project is to “restore and conserve the historical functions and vitality of the Rio Grande in Colorado for improved water quality, agricultural water use, riparian health, wildlife and aquatic species habitat, recreation, and community safety while meeting the requirements of the Rio Grande Compact,” (RGWRSP, 3).

Conejos, Costilla County, San Luis Valley, and Trinchera. Conservancy districts are divisions of local government that construct, pay for, and operate water projects. Colorado law established in 2004 seeks adequate recharge of the aquifer and establishes the basis for the formation of groundwater management subdistricts (see sidebar).

There are also several local and regional advocacy organizations involved in promoting watershed restoration. In addition to the Colorado Rio Grande Restoration Foundation, which oversees the long-term implementation of the Strategic Plan, these include the Alamosa River Foundation, the Colorado Acequia Association, the Colorado Foundation for Water Education, the Rio Grande Basin Round Table, the Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, the San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council, and the San Luis Valley Water Protection Coalition. The nonprofit Colorado Field School and Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative both focus on educating residents, students, and the general public on natural resource issues, especially water conservation.

Within this rich “infrastructure” for governmental, landowner, and citizen action, the heritage area can play a supportive role in promoting watershed restoration efforts and educational initiatives. Where feasible and appropriate, it may also play a leadership role in coordinating interpretation of water resources within the broader context of the region’s cultural heritage. As discussed in the preceding section, opportunities also exist for the heritage area to promote the development of water-oriented recreational opportunities – both physical and programmatic – to include water and river tourism-related business development.

**ACTION:** Work with federal and state public agencies, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to promote the goals and objectives of the Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan.

**ACTION:** Work with partners to promote education programs and demonstration projects that are designed to teach local residents and visitors about the critical role that water plays in sustaining the culture and economy of the heritage area.

**ACTION:** Ensure that interpretive projects convey the importance and intricacy of the Rio Grande Basin’s hydrologic system.

**ACTION:** Promote the vision of the Rio Grande corridor as a regional recreational resource.

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**Groundwater Management Subdistricts**

The goal of groundwater management subdistricts is to restore the water balance in the SLV and restore the aquifer levels to a sustainable level, in part through providing farmers with a financial incentive to take a certain amount of land out of agricultural production within each subdistrict so that the groundwater can be recharged. If 51 percent of the landowners owning at least 51 percent of the land within a proposed subdistrict request formation of the district through a petition process, landowners will be required to pay a flat fee as a member of the district.

Additional fees are based on usage of water compared to the surface water supplied to the system for any piece of ground. Lands with no surface rights pay the most, while lands with adequate surface water for their needs pay the least. Farmers who intentionally take land out of production will be compensated through fees paid into the subdistrict in addition to compensation from other programs, such as the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Heide, 16).

Owners of “surface water credits” who wish to sell their credits to other members may also do so. The Rio Grande Water Conservation District manages the groundwater management subdistricts.

To date, only one subdistrict within the San Luis Valley (Subdistrict No. 1, located north of the Rio Grande River near Monte Vista) has been recognized as a legal entity. Five other subdistricts have yet to be recognized.

**ACTION:** Work with partner agencies and organizations, as well as tourism-related businesses, to promote and enhance awareness of existing water-oriented recreation opportunities (fishing, boating, swimming, birding, etc.).

**ACTION:** In accordance with recommendations found in 5.7, above, work with partners to help develop small eco-tourism business development opportunities that focus on water and river-oriented recreation.

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**Monitor Solar Energy Zone Development Initiatives**

Within the past several years, much interest has been focused on the San Luis Valley’s potential for producing renewable energy. In a report published in 2008, the
Governor’s Energy Office identified the San Luis Valley as a prime location for solar development in Colorado. Clear skies, cool temperatures, elevations over 7,000 feet, and 1-3 percent gradient slopes on the valley floor make the region a highly favorable location for the development of large-scale solar facilities. However, because these large-scale solar facilities usually require the construction of high-voltage transmission lines to deliver the energy to areas of need, and the facilities generally consume large amounts of water, there is great concern over the potential environmental impacts that could result from such development. (http://www.slvsec.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=10)

Within the heritage area, three sites in BLM ownership totaling 15,244 acres have been identified as Solar Energy Zones (SEZs), or sites suitable for large-scale solar energy development (one additional SEZ, the De Tilla SEZ comprising approximately 1,000 acres, is located just to the north of the heritage area near Saguache). In order to meet NEPA/Section 106 requirements, a Draft Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Solar PEIS) analysis covering seventeen SEZs in six states has been prepared. This study conducted an in-depth analysis of each SEZ, including extensive visual impact analysis. Findings on impacts to resources within the National Heritage Area are summarized in the following sections.

**Fourmile East**

Located northwest of Blanca (northwest of the Hwy 150 and 160 intersection) in Alamosa County, the proposed Fourmile East SEZ contains 2,882 acres. As summarized in the Draft PEIS, SEZ development would have a significant effect on recreational users of the Blanca Area of Critical Environment Concern/Special Recreation Management Area (ACEC/SRMA), and there would be an adverse impact on wilderness characteristics in a small portion of the Sangre de Cristo Wilderness Area (WA). There is potential for adverse impacts on night sky viewing opportunities in Great Sand Dunes National Park (NP) and in other specially designated areas near the SEZ. The historic setting along 12 mi (19 km) of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail would be adversely affected, and there would be potential impact on 71 mi (114 km) of the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway. There may be an adverse impact on Native American religious values associated with Blanca Peak. Because the SEZ is located within the recently designated Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, solar development could be inconsistent with this new designation. (Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS C-113 October 2011)

The Supplement to the Draft PEIS recommends that approximately 1,000 acres of the original proposed boundary be removed, mainly from the eastern edge, to avoid impacts on various resources. Excluding these areas will avoid
impacts on known cultural resources, a historic playa basin (wetlands), Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway, the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, the Pike National Historic Trail, big game winter range, and important riparian habitat. To reduce the visual resource impacts of solar development within the proposed Fourmile East SEZ, SEZ-specific visual resource mitigation requirements have been developed. Within the area of the SEZ that was labeled to meet Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II-consistent objectives in the Draft Solar PEIS, all forms of development will be limited to 10 ft or less, and the technology must be restricted to either photovoltaic [PV] technologies of less than 10 ft, or technologies with comparable or lower heights and reflectivity. For all remaining portions of the SEZ, the solar development will be restricted to either photovoltaic (PV) technologies of less than 10 ft, or technologies with comparable or lower height and reflectivity. (Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS C-117 October 2011 http://solareis.anl.gov/documents/supp/Appendix_C.pdf)

**Los Mogotes East**

Located directly west of Town of Romeo and Hwy 285 in Conejos County, the proposed Los Mogotes East SEZ contains 2,650 acres. Potential adverse impacts identified in the Draft Solar PEIS are summarized as follows:

The Los Mogotes Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC) is located within 1 mi (1.6 km) of the SEZ and could be affected by its development, with increased vehicular traffic and disturbance that could impair its value to wildlife. The Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway passes within 3 mi (5 km) of the SEZ; any impact of development of the SEZ on the byway and byway users is not known, but it would be highly visible. The SEZ is located within the designated Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. The SEZ is within 1 mi (1.6 km) of the route of the West Fork of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail, and development would have a major impact on the historic and visual integrity of the trail.

Based upon this analysis, approximately 3,268 acres on the western side of the SEZ were eliminated from the original proposed boundary to avoid impacts on significant cultural resources; grazing allotments; an important riparian area; Gunnison prairie dog, burrowing owl, ferruginous hawk, mountain plover, pronghorn birthing and winter habitat; and visual resources. To reduce the visual resource impacts of solar development within the proposed Los Mogotes East SEZ, allowable solar technologies within the remaining area comprising the SEZ will be limited to photovoltaic systems with panel heights no greater than 10 ft, or technologies with comparable or less height and reflectivity. Because of the extensive potential impacts from solar development in the portion of the Los Mogotes East SEZ that has been eliminated, those lands will be considered solar right-of-way exclusion areas; that is, applications for solar development on those lands will not be accepted by the BLM (Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS C-134 October 2011). http://solareis.anl.gov/documents/supp/Appendix_C.pdf

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**Visual Resource Management Classes I-IV**

The BLM Visual Resource Management (VRM) system involves inventorying scenic values and establishing management objectives for those values through the resource management planning process, and then evaluating proposed activities to determine whether they conform to the management objectives (http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/Recreation/recreation_national/RMS.html).

As defined by the BLM, the objective of VRM Class I is to “preserve the existing character of the landscape.” This class provides for natural ecological changes; however, it does not preclude very limited management activity. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be very low and should not attract attention.

The objective of VRM Class II is to “retain the existing character of the landscape.” The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of the casual observer. Any changes must repeat the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.”

The objective of VRM Class III is to “partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be low. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape”

The objective of VRM Class IV is to “provide for management activities, which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape.” The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. These management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements of the landscape. (Draft Solar PEIS, 10.3-246). (http://solareis.anl.gov/sez/fourmile_east/index.cfm).
Antonito Southeast
Located just to the southeast of Antonito in Conejos County, the proposed Antonito Southeast SEZ contains 9,712 acres. Potential adverse impacts identified in the Draft Solar PEIS are summarized as follows:

The Cumbres & Toltec Area of Environmental Concern (ACEC) could be moderately affected by development within the SEZ, and there is potential that the scenic train ride experience could be diminished for some visitors. Wilderness characteristics within the San Antonio Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in New Mexico could be impaired. Potential impact on use of the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway is not known. The SEZ is located within the designated Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. The SEZ has the potential to adversely affect the West Fork of the North Branch of the Old Spanish Trail" (Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS C-79, October 2011).

To reduce the visual resource impacts of solar development within this area, SEZ-specific visual resource mitigation requirements have been recommended by the EIS. On the western side of the SEZ that was labeled to meet VRM Class II-consistent objectives in the Draft Solar PEIS, all forms of development will be limited to 10 ft or under, and the technology will be restricted to either photovoltaic technologies of less than 10 ft, or technologies with comparable or lower height and reflectivity. Within the area of the SEZ that was labeled to meet VRM Class III-consistent objectives in the Draft Solar PEIS, the solar development will be restricted to either PV technologies of less than 10 ft or technologies with comparable or lower height and reflectivity (Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS C-83, October 2011; http://solareis.anl.gov/documents/supp/Appendix_C.pdf).

Transmission Lines and Substations
While the specific solar design standards recommended in the Supplemental Draft EIS study are designed to mitigate negative impacts to visual resources, it should be noted that the Solar PEIS included only a generic analysis of the environmental impacts of construction and operation of transmission lines and substations (Section 5 of the Draft Solar PEIS). This analysis was based upon construction of transmission lines from the individual proposed SEZs to the nearest existing transmission line based on the assumption that existing lines could be upgraded. In some cases, however, such as the Antonito Southeast SEZ, a new four-mile transmission line outside the SEZ would be needed. In other cases, upgrades of existing transmission lines would be required to bring electricity from the proposed SEZ to load centers (321). As such, the Supplement to the Draft Solar PEIS recommends that a revised transmission analysis is needed to better quantify impacts in the Final Solar PEIS for those SEZs being carried forward in the analysis (321). (http://solareis.anl.gov/documents/supp/Appendix_C.pdf).

ACTION: Monitor the status of energy development, to include future transmission lines and substations, and their potential impacts on the National Heritage Area’s cultural landscape. Be prepared to comment knowledgeably about development, impacts, and mitigation.
Introduction

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area promotes its heritage through a variety of means. While some communities and institutions sponsor formal educational programs, others engage residents and visitors alike through more recreational or leisure-time experiences, such as festivals, art shows, museums, farmers’ markets, musical performances, and youth programs. All, however, keep alive the rich cultural traditions that reinforce the identity of the heritage area’s communities and instill pride within its residents.

This chapter focuses specifically upon how the heritage area can provide leadership in assuring that communities, schools, and residents are fully engaged in the mission of conserving a sense of community and tradition; encourage learning opportunities that demonstrate the importance of the region’s cultural heritage; and provide support to existing programs and new initiatives that build both community and visitor awareness of the heritage area’s character and significance. Education and engagement are closely tied to interpretation, and one purpose of educational outreach is building local audiences for interpretive attractions and institutions.

It is not possible to “preserve” culture and traditions in the same sense that we would preserve or restore an adobe church or other historic or traditional structure. Culture, like nature, is always changing. It is possible, however, to recognize the conditions that surround and support culture and traditions, and based on that knowledge, to design programs that support and celebrate community and heritage. The objective is to create the context in which individuals, families, groups, and communities can maintain cultural traditions and ties, transmit them to the next generation, and take advantage of opportunities as they arise, whether those opportunities are economic, performance, or educational in nature.

The Planning Foundation for Conserving Community and Traditions

The National Heritage Area’s enabling legislation, the goals developed as we planned for the heritage area, and the scenarios that outlined our strategies form the foundation for planning. Aspects of these documents as they relate to conserving communities and traditions are noted below.
Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Management Plan
Conserving Community & Traditions

The National Heritage Area’s Enabling Legislation

The need for initiatives promoting public awareness of the special nature of this National Heritage Area’s resources as a part of our programming is established in its enabling legislation, Public Law 111-11, Title VII, Subtitle A, Section 8001, which is summarized in Chapter 1. The legislation describes the purposes for which the heritage area was designated and outlines requirements for the management plan, including the following language drawn from Sec. 8001(c):

- Developing recreational and educational opportunities in the heritage area; and
- Increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources of the heritage area.

National Heritage Area Goals for Conserving Community & Tradition

Primary Goal 2: Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization. In particular:

Goal 2-1, Protect and celebrate living heritage resources—language, art, traditions, spirituality, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices. Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

Goal 2-2, Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

Heritage Area Goals

Primary Goal 2 developed for the National Heritage Area relates to conserving community and tradition (see sidebar). This goal and related sub-goals emphasize protecting living heritage resources and building understanding of the region’s cultural identity along with practices to improve communities’ economic conditions, which are addressed in Chapter 9.

Direction for Conserving Culture and Tradition from the Planning Process

Early in our planning, from input from public meetings and stakeholder interviews, it became clear that several key concepts and initiatives are central to conserving the culture and traditions of the heritage area. These included targeted collaboration with schools and colleges to teach young people about their heritage, engaging youth, recording and documenting traditions and artifacts, supporting and promoting existing cultural programs, and encouraging broader community involvement with all initiatives.

Strategic Objectives for Conserving Community and Traditions

In order for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to thrive, residents, communities, organizations, and institutions must be fully engaged in conserving and promoting the region’s cultural heritage and identity. Creation of a rich and diverse program of community education and engagement will be stimulated through five key strategies:

- Creating and promoting a heritage pride and community memory program so that residents come to view themselves as an integral part of the heritage area, which can also help to record cultural traditions and memories.
- Coordinating and encouraging community engagement in arts and cultural programs and events that build community awareness and understanding of the heritage area’s resources, character, and significance.
- Coordinating with teachers, school systems, parents, and students to develop well-designed youth education programs that increase understanding and appreciation of local history and culture, and how it all relates to the long-term sustainability of the region.
- Engaging young people in leadership development and creating a deep understanding of community functions, needs, and priorities is a good investment in lasting leadership for this National Heritage Area and our communities.
- Encouraging continued dialogue and action reflecting the deep community awareness of agriculture’s cultural ties and possibilities for community and economic well-being.

Chapter 10, Management & Implementation, offers guidance in general for partnering, and for a communications plan where much of the work described in this chapter can be blended.
Much of the cultural significance of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area stems from its residents – their families, traditions, faith, and communities. The heritage area seeks to encourage individuals and groups to preserve memories. Here, Vivien Rivera of San Jose Catholic Church in Capulin, a village in Conejos County, shares memorabilia of the church's 100th anniversary of its founding in the late 19th century.

**Promoting Heritage Pride and Community Memory**

Since so much of the cultural significance of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area stems from its residents – their families, traditions, faith, and communities – it is important that any initiatives designed to promote local interest in and support of the heritage area allow residents the opportunity to personalize their relationships with it. Given the strong sense of pride in self-reliance, rugged individualism, ethnic diversity, and cultural association with community, church, and place, we expect the self-identification strategy described here to encourage multiple narratives and means by which groups and individuals can selectively represent themselves and their differences and commonalities.

Formal development of the heritage area's identity and its “brand” is addressed by later chapters on interpretation and heritage tourism (Chapters 7 and 8). Self-identity is different, however, in that it is unique to each individual. While the National Heritage Area’s interpretive strategy should help answer the question “What is the meaning of this place?” the heritage pride and community memory strategy that grows from the ideas in this chapter should encourage residents to answer the question: “How do I see myself belonging to this place?”

Self-identification, whether at the level of the individual, family, or community, should instill pride and a sense of belonging within a broader history and place that all have had a role in shaping. At the same time, promotion and communication of the public presence of the heritage area needs to be well-structured and cohesive enough that the identity of the heritage area as a whole is clear and comprehensible to residents and visitors alike. The following sections describe programs to support this concept.

**The Novela Project**

The *Novela Project* is an oral history study that explores the rich historical and cultural legacy that has shaped life in the San Luis Valley for more than two hundred years. Students of the Novela Project course explore the history at-large of the San Luis Valley and learn interview techniques and ethnographic concepts in preparation for engaging community residents in recorded interviews. Students are then engaged in creative writing exercises which are developed into play script form. Ultimately, this endeavor finds its full expression on the stage as an original, full-length theatre production reflecting the lives and experiences of the people of the San Luis Valley.

The *Novela Project Theatre Production* is an opportunity for community members to participate in all aspects of the project including storytelling, acting, production design, technical support, set construction, box office, advertising, and promotion. While community members are not professional actors, they embody qualities that are equally important to such a production. Language (Spanish), dialect and speech patterns, mannerism, gesture, movement and appearance are a few of those qualities that are central to the performance. Community members volunteer their participation in the theatre production. They are the actors, stage crew, run crew (light and sound operators), designers (set, prop and costume), builders (set, costume) and front of house operations (box office and house management). The NP provides training in all aspects of theatre production in order to build capacity among participants.

The *Novela Project Institute* is a week-long professional development course designed to train teachers how to guide students in a quest to recover personal heritage; express that knowledge through creative and academic presentation; and understand the importance of that heritage in relation to local, regional, national and global history. Both the Novela Project and Novela Project Institute are funded by Colorado Council of the Arts. [http://www.adams.edu/community/partnerships/novela.php](http://www.adams.edu/community/partnerships/novela.php)

**Community Memory Collections and Repository**

Collecting community memories would involve developing a program to record oral histories, family photos, photos of artwork or hand crafted items, recipes, songs, etc., that lets each individual or family contribute what they feel is an important part of their heritage, and their community’s heritage, within the broader context of the region’s history. Collections would be cataloged and, as appropriate and
with due care and credit, be displayed at heritage museums or exhibits or used to inform public presentation of the region’s heritage.

Events built around this idea will require organization and coordination, and significant outreach to encourage involvement at the individual level – perhaps through an organized “Community Memory Day” or “Día de Memoria de Comunidad” within each county or each community. Churches might also participate if appropriate.

During the planning process, the Board of Directors was urged by participants to spur the creation of at least one repository for documents, objects, and oral histories. This was a strong expression of the sense across the board expressed during the planning process by all involved that without care, treasures will be lost to succeeding generations. The positive attention to caring in such depth for these treasures in and of itself can help individuals to value what they have, and seek preservation assistance to continue their own involvement in stewardship. Such a repository could support events that “collect community memories.”

**Virtual Narratives**

In an effort to capture the cultural diversity of heritage area residents, “virtual narratives” could be created to develop an online collection of resident profiles. These would be designed to capture an individual’s sense of identity and personal heritage (i.e., ethnicity, family history or genealogy, community, birthplace, family traditions, church or morada affiliation, interests, photos of family, artwork, etc.). A program based on this concept can also provide opportunities for each participant to write a short narrative that discusses when and why they came to the San Luis Valley, what they like most about living within the National Heritage Area, important memories, and how they would like to see their community change in the future. While the site could be open for public access, privacy controls could limit chosen information only to residents if desired. If this program creates a digital community among participants, this could also be a great way to spread information on events and programs that would be of interest to participants.

More research would be needed to determine technical feasibility given program objectives. Challenges would be reaching the older generation or those without computers, but there could be outreach days with technical assistance, or a young-adult volunteer corps that could create pages for elders. The program could also become a project sponsored by a local college or school district.

**Individual Property Placards**

The Colorado Centennial Farms Program recognizes individual property owners – working farms or ranches that have remained in the same family continuously for 100 years or more. This program is designed to recognize the important role agriculture has played in our state’s history and economic development. There are currently 11 designated Centennial Farms within the heritage area.

In order to give individuals another option for self-identifying with the heritage area, a special placard could be awarded to any property owner who would like to have their home, farm, or ranch recognized as a contributing heritage area property, regardless of its size or how long it has been in the same family. Many people are very proud of what they have preserved or been handed down from past generations – even if their property does not meet the criteria for designation as a Centennial Farm or formal listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While this could be a stand-alone program, placards can possibly be created for other properties that contribute to the heritage area’s character (not necessarily farms), recognizing the many owners who are proud of what they have preserved from their legacy of past generations.
be linked to participation in either of the two programs mentioned immediately above. In any case, special standards would need to be developed.

**ACTION:** Support existing oral history programs and other partner programs in documenting the history and the stories of the Valley’s many cultures.

**ACTION:** Investigate existing oral history projects and training programs designed to explore personal heritage. Use successful programs and techniques as the basis for establishing standards and procedures for collecting individual “Community Memory” contributions.

**ACTION:** Create and train a “Community Memory Corps of Volunteers” responsible for accessioning, cataloging, and conserving individual contributions (to include digital collections and web-based media).

**ACTION:** Encourage and support the development of at least one central repository for documents, objects, and oral histories.

**ACTION:** Work with the new Heritage Center in San Luis or other repository to design an interpretive program for presenting these collections to the public (to include web-based media that can be featured at other heritage area museums).

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Coordinating and encouraging involvement in arts and cultural programs, and events that build community awareness of the heritage area’s resources, character, and significance are central to the heritage area’s strategy for

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**Adobe de Oro Arts Council (Concilio de Artes)**

An art service organization founded in 1982, Adobe de Oro researches and documents the traditional arts and humanities of the Indio-Hispanic community of the San Luis Valley. In addition, it encourages and supports the development of Indio-Hispanic artists and scholars throughout the region. Programs include documentaries, conferences, festivals, exhibitions, workshops, and symposiums.

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**Ventero Open Press**

Ventero Open Press is a nonprofit organization that raises funds for the arts and culture of the San Luis Valley. It also provides education, scholarships, art supplies, and exhibition opportunities for both emerging and established artists. The organization maintains a studio facility in San Luis that includes print presses, a gallery featuring regional artists, and a full service espresso bar (http://www.ventero.org).

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**The Community Partnerships Gallery**

The Community Partnerships Gallery at Adams State University is dedicated to exhibiting a large variety of community art and crafts from across the entire San Luis Valley. Every month a new exhibit is held where local artists and craftspeople have the opportunity to show and sell their work.

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**Rio Costilla Studio Tour**

The Rio Costilla Studio Tour provides an opportunity for the public to visit the homes, studios, and galleries of approximately 25 artists and craftspeople living within Costilla County. The tour takes place annually during two days in September. Work includes painting, print-making, photography, bronze sculpture, wood and stone carving, fine and rustic furniture, ceramics, African drums, artisan bread-baking, etc.
conserving community and traditions. Despite its relatively small population and community size, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brims with opportunities for residents to participate in or contribute their skills to high-quality art programs and exhibits and musical and dance performances, as well as community festivals and special events where these talents and traditions take center stage.

**Arts**

The number of talented artists and the quality and diversity of art education found within the heritage area is outstanding. It has been estimated that there are approximately 8,000 artists in the San Luis Valley – or about 15 percent of the population in a six-county area that includes the National Heritage Area. In addition to traditional visual arts, such as drawing and painting, the heritage area also includes photographers, printmakers, sculptors, ceramic artists, metal artists, and weavers, many world renowned. The folk art of santero woodcarving, native to northern New Mexico.
and southern Colorado, is particularly prized. Artists here participate in exhibitions and display their works in galleries throughout the San Luis Valley and elsewhere. In addition to weaving and colcha embroidery, which are typical folk arts of the Hispano culture (see sidebars), quilting, crocheting, knitting, and needlepoint are also practiced individually and in groups by a great number of Anglo-American women in the San Luis Valley. Quilting bees are quite common in many of the Mormon communities (Everts, 34). In 1991 the San Luis Valley Quilt Guild was founded in to promote the art, skill, and appreciation of quilts and quilt making. Each year the guild, which has approximately 60 members from all over the San Luis Valley, displays their work at the San Luis Valley Quilt Show.

There are many existing opportunities for community engagement with the arts, whether through direct participation in the several of the heritage area’s art education programs, or by encouraging residents to visit galleries and attend special exhibits and events. The heritage area can play

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**Santos**

Religious woodcarvings of the saints, traditionally known as Santos, is a Hispano art form that originated in New Mexico. The term translates into two separate, but related words in English: “saints” and “holy.” Because Santos were devotional works of art representing God, Christ, the Virgin Mary, the angels and saints, they were not meant for detached contemplation or for aesthetic purposes, but for religious use. There are two types of santos, bultos and retablos. Retablos are religious paintings applied to hand-hewn wooden panels; bultos are three-dimensional carvings. Traditionally carved out of the roots of the cottonwood tree or other indigenous species, Bultos were often gessoed and painted, and then sealed with pinon sap varnish. Santeros are woodcarvers, traditionally self-taught, who believe that God works through them, and that they see a saint or the image of Christ in the wood before they start.

Santos were an important and necessary part of the religious lives of Hispanics in the colonial period. Churches and moradas were adorned with retablos, altar screens and bultos and many families also had private devotional altars graced with Santos (www.thesantafesite.com).
American music, while not having as firm a base in the valley as its Hispanic counterpart, is still performed at local community events such as the Mormon Pioneer Day in La Jara, dances, school performances, weddings, and funerals. The styles represented can be roughly categorized as old time, bluegrass fiddle music, western duets, and cowboy songs (Everts, 77).

Mariachi is a genre of music that originated in Mexico. It is an integration of stringed instruments highly influenced by the cultural impacts of the historical development of Western Mexico. The mariachi ensemble generally consists of violins, trumpets, a classical guitar, a vihuela (a high-pitched, five-string guitar), a guitarrón (a large acoustic bass guitar) and, on occasion, a harp. The musicians dress in silver-studded charro outfits with wide-brimmed hats.

Most of the music and dance groups within the heritage area comprise volunteers who share a love of folk music and dance. Continuation and growth of these programs can be strengthened by heritage area support, recognition, and promotion.

**Cultural Programs and Events**

Dozens of community and special events take place each year throughout the heritage area. Some of these are promoted widely and attract visitors from around the region, while others are practiced only by particular ethnic groups within their own communities. In some instances, living traditions are kept alive through local organizations and academic programs at Adams State University, such as the Hispano Heritage Days and Hilos Culturales, which are dedicated to their preservation and promotion (see sidebars).

*Fiestas de Santiago y Santa Ana* is an example of Hispano cultural traditions that have been carried on for more than 150 years. This is a weekend event where San Luis and the nearby village of Chama honor their respective patron saints – Santiago and Santa Ana. This celebratory weekend attracts as many as 10,000 visitors who have ties to Rio Culebra acequia villages, and provides an opportunity for family and friends to reunite on an annual basis.

Other communities also sponsor annual festivals to celebrate ethnic or religious heritage. In some cases these are tied to patron saint festivals while others are more secular in origin. Each varies in length and custom from town to town. Examples include the La Jara Glory Days, Manassa Pioneer Days, and Alamosa’s Summerfest on the Rio and Round-up Rodeo. In some cases where ethnic populations are small, such as the Japanese, cultural traditions are passed on in the intimacy of home surroundings and their religious institutions, and reinforced by communication with relatives in other parts of the country with a larger ethnic population (Everts, 6).
Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Management Plan
Conserving Community & Traditions

**ACTION:** Coordinate the publicizing of cultural events and programs in the many media vehicles managed by heritage area partners, including the heritage area's website, newsletters, and press releases. Explore and employ ways to reach residents who do not have access to a computer, especially through churches, where multiple generations can be reached through church newsletters, announcements, events, etc.

**ACTION:** Work with heritage area and cultural program providers on effective, collaborative research into the needs and interests of local audiences.

**ACTION:** Involve the arts and cultural programming community in bringing engaging and relevant interpretation to visitor audiences.

**ACTION:** Partner with local trades organizations or artists’ guilds in creating training or promote existing apprentice programs in preservation and conservation trades and skills.

**Volunteers for Museums and Cultural Centers**

The heritage area has several museums and cultural centers that currently serve as both interpretive centers and repositories of the region’s cultural heritage. Each features special exhibits and educational programs that heavily depend upon dedicated community volunteers who help collect and catalog items, provide tours, and organize events.

In partnership with these facilities, the heritage area can help can help match their needs to residents’ interests through coordinated outreach campaigns such as sponsoring information sessions or open houses or posting to the heritage area’s website.

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**Monte Vista Crane Festival**

The internationally recognized Monte Vista Crane Festival takes place each February or March. It coincides with the annual sandhill crane migration, which involves approximately 20,000 birds of the Rocky Mountain flock that spend part of each spring and fall in the San Luis Valley, as they have for millennia. The festival hosts wildlife experts, local naturalists, and biologists who present educational workshops at the Monte Vista Middle School.

Bus tours to the nearby refuge and adjacent farmlands provide visitors with the opportunity to view this spectacle “up close and personal,” with a knowledgeable local guide. Special tours feature raptor identification, sunset trips to view cranes, and visits to closed areas of the refuge for Crane Fest participants. Although Monte Vista, the town near the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, is not within the National Heritage Area, the refuge itself is, and the festival broadly benefits the region. The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad offers a fun and educational rail ride between Alamosa and Monte Vista during the Southbound migration of cranes (courtesy Sean Canon).

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**Hispano Heritage Day**

Each year, Adams State University hosts the Hispano Heritage Day, which includes a full day of performances, exhibits, and vendors, all dedicated to the recognition of Hispano culture. Exhibits included weaving, artwork, and genealogy, and food vendors serve a variety of traditional ethnic food.

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**Hilos Culturales Summer Institute**

The Hilos Culturales (Threads of Culture) Summer Institute, which also takes place at Adams State University, is a week-long event featuring numerous presentations on Hispano traditions of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Exhibits typically include photographs, narrative highlights, and musical collections of contributing participants.
ACTION: Work with partners to develop a list of their volunteer needs and assist in creating volunteer position descriptions.

ACTION: Establish methods by which volunteer positions can be tracked and effectively advertised to residents (such as sponsoring information sessions or open houses and posting to the heritage area’s website).

ACTION: Create a program to recognize volunteers and their contributions to the National Heritage Area and its partners.

ACTION: Encourage museums and cultural centers to promote published books, journals, and articles that are written by local authors. Feature a link to these resources on the heritage area website.

Higher Education Programs
The heritage area is lucky to have two institutions of higher learning. Both offer a wide variety of programs that not only offer students opportunities to learn about local history and culture, but also challenge them to purposefully shape the future of their communities.

Adams State University
At the college level, Adams State University offers several courses of study that provide students with the opportunity to learn about and research their local heritage. This includes undergraduate degree programs in history, as well as a master’s degree in humanities with a history emphasis. History and anthropology minors are also available. The university also offers students and vocational archeologists the opportunity to participate in the Fort Massachusetts Archaeology Field School, which offers training in the basic techniques in prehistoric and historical archeology. Students also have the opportunity to participate in active historical reenactment and living history groups within the region, which may involve loading and firing of Civil War-era cannons; the use of infantry and cavalry equipment; preparation of period foods; blacksmithing; local Hispanic culture; flint knapping; local folklore; and Victorian domestic arts. Adams State also coordinates a student internship program, where students can work at museums as part of the university’s fledgling museum studies program.

Adams State University is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, which requires a Hispanic enrollment of at least 25 percent. Adams State’s student body is nearly 27 percent Hispanic. The U.S. Department of Education offers large grants to institutions defined as HSI that can be used for many academic purposes serving all ethnicities at the institution. These include faculty development, funds and administrative management, development and improvement of academic programs, endowment funds, curriculum development, scientific or laboratory equipment for teaching, renovation of instructional facilities, joint use of facilities, academic tutoring, counseling programs, and student support services.

Trinidad State Junior College
Trinidad State Junior College offers programs in art and graphic design, theater, hospitality and tourism, architecture and construction, gunsmithing, fine woodworking, audio/video technology (to include film), and agriculture, food, and natural resources.

ACTION: Work with Adams State University and Trinidad State Junior College to recruit student applicants for partners’ intern and apprentice programs.

ACTION: Collaborate with Adams State University and Trinidad State Junior College in developing a comprehensive program of research into and preservation of cultural traditions.

ACTION: Partner with Adams State University and other institutions of higher learning to offer training in accessioning, cataloging, and conservation standards to staff and volunteers of museums and other cultural sites.
Youth Education and Leadership Development

According to the Pre-K-12 Colorado State Academic Standards, children within the heritage area are introduced to Colorado history and culture in the fourth grade. Earth and life sciences are integrated into every grade, starting with kindergarten. Visual and performing arts, including music, dance, and theater are also a core part of the primary and secondary curriculum (full standards for each subject area can be found on the Colorado Department of Education website at http://www.cde.state.co.us).

Local history, local arts, and local culture, however, are not emphasized through any formal curriculum standards, and students often graduate without a full understanding or appreciation of the cultural significance that is unique to San Luis Valley (i.e., land ownership and use, local dialect, folk arts, dance, music, agricultural traditions, ethnic food traditions, etc.). This is a missed opportunity to help local youth not only understand their past and define their self-identity within the region’s broader cultural context, but also to enrich their education by exploring ways in which they may personally contribute to the conservation of their communities and unique cultural traditions. This may be especially true when it comes to the teaching of standard Spanish without reference to the local dialect handed down directly from native speakers, at a time when concern is rising about the loss of regional dialects and the heritage of American speakers of non-English languages. This includes such languages as Czech and Norwegian as well as Native American languages (Little 2012).

A brief overview of Colorado’s standards for subject areas is provided in the next section, as are examples of how these standards can provide opportunities for local and regional history, arts, and cultural traditions to serve as the vehicle through which these topics can be explored and understood. The heritage area can play a key role in supporting innovation and expansion of local school curriculums to better educate local students about the heritage area’s history, and environment, and culture.

In addition to adapting ordinary curricula under the state standards, there are several existing educational programs that could be more widely promoted within the heritage area. One developed by the Colorado Council on the Arts (CCA) includes a wonderful collection of essays and lesson plans specifically targeted to the heritage of Colorado, and the San Luis Valley in particular. Titled “Ties that Bind” and prepared by CCA Folklorist Kathleen Figgen, topics include colcha embroidery, santero carving, weaving, foodways, architecture, Japanese culture, etc. (see sidebar). New curricula are also being developed, such as a fourth grade curriculum for the Old Spanish Trail that meets state standards in Colorado and New Mexico. Initiatives such as this should not only be applauded, but also be recognized and promoted as examples for others to follow.

Besides formal lesson plans, there are several sites within the heritage area that actively engage students with local history, and serve as examples to build upon. Living history programs, guided tours, and historical reenactments such as those at Fort Garland have long been a primary way to
Table 6-1: Ways to Use Local Resources to Meet Colorado’s Social Studies Standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Studies Curriculum Standard</th>
<th>Social Studies Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate a historical source for point of view and historical context.</td>
<td>Research the history of the Conejos Land Grant. Conduct an oral history interview with a descendant of one of the original family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gather and analyze historical information, including contradictory data, from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including sources located on the Internet, to support or reject hypotheses.</td>
<td>Research the formation of the Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos (SPMDTU); review SPMDTU literature, newspaper accounts, and other local sources to understand and critique different perspectives among observers; test the hypothesis that discrimination occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiate between facts and historical interpretations, recognizing that a historian's narrative reflects his or her judgment about the significance of particular facts.</td>
<td>Research Anglo-American accounts of conflict with the Ute tribe within the San Luis Valley. Compare those perspectives with that of the Utes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

educate students, as have train rides on the Rio Grande and the Cumbres & Toltec scenic railroads. Innovative and engaging exhibits and ranger-led programs at the Great Sand Dunes National Park are also an effective means of teaching students about the valley’s natural history and physical evolution. Certainly the many galleries and exhibits, musical and dance performances, and other cultural programs and events mentioned in the sections above offer abundant opportunities for students to explore various visual and performing art traditions and techniques.

**Social Studies**

According to the Colorado Social Studies curriculum, fourth grade students are expected to be able to organize and sequence events to understand the concepts of chronology and cause and effect in the history of Colorado. They are also expected to develop an understanding of historical eras, individuals, groups, ideas and themes in Colorado history, and their relationships to key events in the United States.

By the time they get to high school, students are expected to be able to critically explore, analyze, and master key concepts of culture, including continuity and change, cause and effect, complexity, unity, and diversity over time. These standards provide ample opportunities for teachers to integrate topics concerning local history and culture into the classroom.

**Science**

Colorado life science curriculum standards require students to understand how living systems interact with their environments, that living systems depend upon natural selection, the interplay between genetics and environment,
Table 6-4: Ways to Use Local Resources to Meet Colorado’s World Languages Standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World Languages Curriculum Standard</th>
<th>World Languages Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify the meaning of unfamiliar</td>
<td>Identify the variety and source of linguistic influences on the Spanish dialect that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>words using decoding skills (such</td>
<td>unique to the San Luis Valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as prefixes and suffixes, root</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>words, knowledge or recognition of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>word or characters in character-based languages)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6-3: Ways to Use Local Resources to Meet Colorado’s Visual and Performing Art Standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual and Performing Art Curriculum Standard</th>
<th>Visual and Performing Art Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actively participate in music making.</td>
<td>Join a local cultural or religious musical group; sing or play an instrument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss how dance can contribute to fitness,</td>
<td>Interview members of Semillas de la Tierra to understand how dance helps them stay in shape and how it makes them feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wellness, and a positive self-image</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate a practiced ability to critically</td>
<td>Research the origin of fiber arts; compare and contrast the differences between San Luis Valley weaving techniques and those found in Spain or Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analyze the origins of art and design across</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all cultures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and how biological evolution accounts for the unity and diversity of living organisms.

Earth science standards require students to understand how Earth’s geologic history and place in space are relevant to our understanding of the processes that have shaped our planet, evaluate evidence that Earth’s geosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere interact as a complex system, and describe how humans are dependent on the diversity of resources provided by earth and sun.

**Visual and Performing Arts**

Colorado dance curriculum standards require students to not only demonstrate competence and confidence in performing a variety of dance styles and genres and awareness of fitness, wellness, and the body’s potential for movement, but also participate in a dance production and understand that dance performance requires technical competency.

Colorado music curriculum standards require students to employ musical skills through a variety of means, including singing, playing instruments, and purposeful movement, demonstrate the expressive elements of music and the processes of development of musical literature from rehearsal to performance.

Colorado art curriculum standards require students to transfer the value of visual arts to lifelong learning and the human experience; explain, demonstrate, and interpret a range of purposes of art and design; recognize, articulate, and debate that the visual arts are a means for expression; and analyze, interpret, and make meaning of art and design critically using oral and written discourse.

**World Languages**

Colorado World Languages curriculum standards require students to understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics, engage in conversations, present information, and demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.

**Teacher Training**

Teachers are natural allies in the heritage area’s goal to promote public awareness of history and culture by reaching out to young people, but they need recognition, interest, and support for what they do. The heritage area must cultivate opportunity and encourage teachers by providing them with resources and experiences that they find useful and that support their activities.

In addition to crafting educational programming around the Colorado Curriculum Standards, as discussed above, opportunities exist to directly engage teachers through workshops and teacher training programs. Any teacher training initiatives must not only be personally stimulating, but also meet professional standards for continuing education so that teachers obtain credit for participating in them.

Table 6-4: Ways to Use Local Resources to Meet Colorado’s World Languages Standards.
A primary objective of teacher training initiatives should be to foster a grass-roots, or bottoms-up approach to curriculum development, where teachers are encouraged to develop their own ideas as to how to incorporate local history, culture, and environment into the classroom (one particular example raised during a stakeholder workshop was having students raise Rio Grande chub that can be released into the river). The heritage area’s role should be to provide information on the themes of the heritage area, the resources that are available (including interpretive sites that already have educational programming), and provide teachers with guidance and examples for creating their own curricula. Teacher training within the National Heritage Area should be a ‘two-way street’ – sites will learn directly from teachers about the teachers’ needs and interests, and teachers will learn from sites about new and exciting ways to engage students in the state curriculum.

**ACTION:** Establish an advisory committee or working group of educators, including teachers, superintendents, and other partners (site and park-based educators), to identify ways in which the seven local school districts can plan and develop programs that use local resources as a basis for education to meet state standards.

**ACTION:** Widely promote curricula and lesson plans that have already been developed, such as “Ties that Bind.”

**ACTION:** Work with partners on creating interactive and engaging opportunities for children, teenagers, and young adults that use local resources (historic sites, environmental resources, community programs, etc.) to meet curriculum requirements; widely promote these opportunities through heritage area publications, website links, etc.

**ACTION:** Identify specific needs for teacher and administrator training (workshops, webinars, continuing education classes, etc.).

**ACTION:** Work to enable educators to utilize heritage area sites effectively for student education.

**ACTION:** Encourage sites to work collaboratively to meet teachers’ and students’ needs.

**ACTION:** Develop an educational section of the heritage area website that promotes developed heritage area curriculum materials, lesson plans, games, and/or activities for use by students, teachers, and parents.

**ACTION:** Help establish a scholastic honors program or special prizes to encourage high school students to undertake special projects in research, interpretation, conservation, the arts, local government, and other subjects.

**ACTION:** Create a recognition program to celebrate educational programming and teachers who incorporate local culture and resources into their courses.

### Youth Leadership

“Your best teachers are the kids” – Participant, Costilla County Stakeholder Workshop (August 9, 2011)

As expressed time and again through public workshops and stakeholder interviews throughout the management planning process, the leadership of heritage area youth is believed to be critical to preserving the region’s heritage, conserving community traditions, and developing heritage tourism programs that expand economic development opportunities to local residents. Engaging young people (and their parents) in leadership development is a good investment in lasting leadership for the heritage area and its communities. Partnerships with the school districts and colleges are critical to achieve this objective, but collaboration with a wide range of existing civic and youth organizations will also be needed.

### Junior Ambassador Program

A program to create “Junior Ambassadors” could be a heritage area-wide educational program designed for middle and/or high-school age children interested in preserving the culture of their community and sharing that
culture with visitors. The purpose of this program would be three-fold: educating youth and developing their leadership potential; sowing the seeds of small-scale tourism business development; and serving as a bridge between technology-based heritage area programs (such as the development of digital collections or web-based communications) and the older generations who do not have the access or skills for computer technology.

A Junior Ambassadors program is conceived to be a stand-alone program managed by the heritage area, but built upon strong partnerships with other existing youth organizations and educational programs. Possible partners include but are not limited to the Novela Project, Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit, the Future Business Leaders of America, the Colorado Field Institute, and Leadership San Luis Valley.

The program could involve educational workshops in oral history interview techniques, social media and marketing, small-business entrepreneurship, heritage tourism and hospitality, and examples for how young leaders can play an important role in preserving heritage area resources and culture. Example programs or projects that could be undertaken by the heritage area through this program include:

- **Oral history collectors and archivists:** Young people are the bridge to the older generation. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, students can, through a coordinated program, play a key role in conducting oral history interviews of older family members and archiving these interviews in ways that enrich the heritage area’s interpretive program.

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### Junior Ranger Program

One example of a successful youth engagement program is the Junior Ranger program offered at the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Most National Parks have Junior Ranger programs, where kids collect badges based upon the completion of a special program (a Junior Ranger Booklet) that requires active engagement with the park’s resources. Programs are designed for three different age groups: 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. A visit of at least two hours is typically required to complete the required sections of the Junior Ranger booklet. All sections for a child’s particular age group must be completed to earn a badge or patch.

A program of this nature can be designed to be available within the schools and focus more broadly upon the heritage area as whole, providing an ideal framework for local schools to begin to develop curriculum that will meet the Colorado curriculum standards as they correlate to Social Studies, Science, Visual and Performing Arts, etc. Through field trips and “virtual visits,” this type of program offers young people who reside in the heritage area and nearby the opportunity to learn by “beginning in their backyard.”

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### Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit

The Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit began in 2007 with the goal of creating an opportunity for young people aged 13 to 18 to get out of the classroom and into the field to learn about history, archeology, heritage tourism, and preservation. Interacting directly with such partners as federal, state, and local governments and agencies as well as nonprofit historic preservation, tourism, community, and education organizations, each Youth Summit provides interactive, outcome-driven learning experiences and service opportunities.

The Colorado Youth Summits have received national attention for the accomplishments of the experiences offered to more than 500 students and their teachers in its first five years. The program has recently been introduced in the state of Washington. The Summits work to achieve four primary objectives: connecting youth and teachers to historic places; involving students in historic preservation activities; expanding tools to support teachers’ efforts in heritage and preservation education; and bolstering local preservation and heritage tourism efforts (http://coloradoyouthsummit.org).
Virtual story board contributors: As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a growing reliance upon digital technology and social media not only to archive historical collections, but also to make them available to others, including visitors. Given the technical competence and interests of the young generation, students can play a key role in not only reaching to the older generation in contributing to digital collections, but also in creating them.

Tour guides, trail guides, and docents: Many museums, cultural sites, parks, campgrounds, farms, and preserves within the heritage area lack funding for paid staff to offer guided tours. There is a wonderful opportunity for young people to serve as junior tour guides, trail guides, and docents to serve the needs of the visitor population, and also gain hands-on education in heritage tourism, eco-tourism, and entrepreneurship.

Interpretive programming: Through the establishment of baseline criteria and standards, students can be challenged to develop their own interpretive presentations and programs. This can be coordinated as a competitive program with recognition given to winning applicants.

- Virtual story board contributors: As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a growing reliance upon digital technology and social media not only to archive historical collections, but also to make them available to others, including visitors. Given the technical competence and interests of the young generation, students can play a key role in not only reaching to the older generation in contributing to digital collections, but also in creating them.

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- Interpretive programming: Through the establishment of baseline criteria and standards, students can be challenged to develop their own interpretive presentations and programs. This can be coordinated as a competitive program with recognition given to winning applicants.

Other Possibilities for Youth Engagement

In addition to those mentioned previously, there are many other organizations that provide partnership opportunities to promote youth leadership development in conserving communities and cultural traditions. These include the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Colorado State Extension programs (such as 4-H), the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative, HistoriCorps, and outreach from federal public lands agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service.
**Future Business Leaders of America**

The FBLA is an organization that may have great potential for assisting the heritage area in aiding students in understanding community functions and goals for tourism. Many schools across the country support student participation in FBLA by supporting teacher-advisors, classroom time, and field trips. Programs are available for middle school, high school, and college groups. Much of its work is organized around encouraging students to compete, both individually and as groups, at levels from regional to national. The key will be to connect to elements of the program involving service learning and community-based school projects. (http://www.fbla.org/)

**ACTION:** Recruit partners and establish an advisory committee of youth leadership development organizations to develop a Junior Ambassador program. Identify roles and responsibilities among partners.

**ACTION:** Implement the program beginning with demonstration/phased efforts.

**ACTION:** Work with partners, teachers, and school administrators to promote the program through school newsletters, churches, partner and heritage area publications, and website links.

**Local Foods and Agriculture**

Like arts, music, and dance, food reflects the cultural diversity of the heritage area. Whether it is the method by which it is grown or raised, prepared, served, preserved, or eaten, food is perhaps one of the most personal and perpetuating means by which family and community traditions are kept alive. Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, where agriculture has served as the foundation of the region’s economy, food takes on an even greater importance.

With a renewed interest in ethnic and locally and sustainably produced foods, several notable public and private initiatives have been undertaken to promote and preserve the region’s food traditions and agricultural heritage. Based upon feedback received from heritage area partners and other stakeholders, we know that the community regards sustainable agricultural production and agritourism as offering tremendous opportunities for both economic development and community engagement, and particularly youth education.

**Farmers’ Markets**

At a national level, increased consumer interest in local, organic, and sustainably produced foods has risen dramatically over the past decade. It is estimated that there are now more than 7,175 farmers’ markets operating throughout the county (up from 1,755 in 1994; USDA), with more being added each year.

In Alamosa and La Jara, and other communities within the San Luis Valley, such as Crestone and South Fork, seasonal farmers’ markets take place on a weekly basis. Other communities throughout the valley, such as Monte Vista and Del Norte, have expressed interest in establishing new weekly markets.

**Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative**

The Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative provides dynamic conservation education to the San Luis Valley community in order to promote stewardship of natural resources. Of particular focus is youth education. In partnership with local schools, the Institute develops educational materials and curricula, sponsors educational field trips, and makes classroom visits to teach students about agriculture sciences, conservation and environmental sciences.

Special workshops are also offered to provide teachers in grades K-12 an opportunity to experience conservation outside the classroom that is tied to Colorado State Academic Standards. In this setting they are able to bring hands-on activities coupled with real world concepts to students (http://www.riograndewatershed.org/education-initiative.html).

**The Alamosa Farmer’s Market takes place weekly in downtown Alamosa (courtesy Tawney Becker).**
Farming Patterns

The number of new farms within Colorado has also risen dramatically over the last 10 years (more than 18 percent), and the size of the average farm is getting significantly smaller (853 acres in 2007 compared to 1,310 acres in 1978). Micro farms (nine acres or less) effectively doubled during that same period (4,276 in 2007 compared to 2,163 in 1978; Colorado Agricultural Census, 2007). Organic and locally produced foods have also been recognized as one of the top 10 sectors of the economy that are expected to grow substantially over the next decade (Buchanan, 2010).

Within the heritage area, Costilla County added the most farms since 2002 (with an increase of 18 percent), whereas the number of farms in Conejos County has grown by 8 percent. Within Alamosa County, the number of farms has remained almost constant, although in all three counties farm size is shrinking. More than half of all farmers within the heritage area, however, do not consider farming as their primary occupation.

Agricultural Education

As evidenced by discussions with partners and stakeholders throughout the management planning process, strengthening and promoting the local agricultural industry is regarded as a high priority for the heritage area. It has also ranked within the top five economic development goals of each county’s “Bottom Up” Economic Development strategy (see...
Both the Rio Culebra Cooperative and the San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition believe, however, that in order for this economic opportunity to be realized, additional educational programs need to be offered to both children and adults, and more opportunities need to be available for local residents to sell their food locally.

In addition to new “Local Foods” legislation (see sidebar), several specific initiatives (some of which are already in the planning stages) are needed to make this goal achievable. All would benefit greatly from heritage area support, coordination, and promotion. These include:

• Sustainable agriculture education requirements that can be integrated into the Colorado curriculum standards (possibly as part of the science or health curricula or as a stand-alone subject). Currently none of the curriculum standards requires students to learn about farming concepts, food sources, production techniques, or engage in actual farming or gardening activities. Perhaps no other subject has a higher potential to be engaged locally by multiple generations, and serve as a means through which both the natural and cultural heritage of the valley can be understood, appreciated, and perpetuated.

• Demonstration gardens or farms that not only provide opportunities to test new and historic agricultural practices, water conservation techniques, seed varieties, livestock breeds, and equipment, but also offer on-site educational workshops.

• Guided tours of existing gardens and farms that can demonstrate sustainable and/or historic agricultural practices and food products.

• Additional community gardens and schoolyard gardens, which provide hands-on learning opportunities.

• Structured internships and apprenticeships, which can be offered in partnership with local school districts, colleges, nonprofit advocacy and education organizations, and privately owned farms.

• Farm to School Programs, which increase use of local foods within schools and colleges.

• Community kitchens that provide affordable access to commercially licensed kitchens for small-scale value-added food production.

• Educational programs that provide information on the basics of small-scale food business entrepreneurship (licensing requirements, food safety standards, business plan and marketing assistance, small business loan opportunities, etc.).
A well-coordinated marketing and promotion program that encourages the purchase of local foods. This includes direct to the consumer (through farmers’ markets and on-farm sales) as well as retail stores, wholesale food distributors, and restaurants.

- Recognition and promotion of heritage area restaurants that feature local foods.

ACTION: Establish a sustainable agriculture advisory committee consisting of representatives from the San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition, the Rio Culebra Cooperative, local farmers, school teachers and administrative officials, state officials, and other local, state, and national food advocacy organizations to identify opportunities for integrating sustainable agriculture education into the school curriculum, both formally and informally.

ACTION: Work with partners to encourage the development of a Farm to School Pilot Program within the National Heritage Area.

ACTION: Support partner initiatives to establish sustainable agriculture demonstration gardens, community gardens, schoolyard gardens, community kitchens, and educational programs.

Promote these sites and programs through heritage area publications, website links, etc.

ACTION: Work with partners to help develop structured sustainable agriculture internship and apprenticeship programs.

ACTION: Develop standards for a heritage area recognition program for sustainable agricultural producers, retailers, and restaurants that serve foods produced within the heritage area.

ACTION: Together with partners, develop a well-coordinated marketing program to promote the range and availability of foods produced within the heritage area.
Chapter 7 • Heritage Area Interpretation

One of the many Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway interpretive exhibits that tell the stories of the heritage area.

Introduction

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area tells the stories of the peoples, cultures, and environment of the lower San Luis Valley and its adjacent mountains. Through its stories, the National Heritage Area builds public awareness of the valley’s significant legacies, supports the local economy through heritage tourism, and strengthens communities by facilitating local initiatives.

Interpretation is at the center of most of what the National Heritage Area seeks to achieve. The San Luis Valley has a distinctive cultural heritage and identity that is closely tied to the character of its landscape. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is dedicated to promoting community well-being and enhancing the quality of life of residents through recognition of the valley’s identity and character. Through interpretation and storytelling, both residents and visitors will become increasingly aware of the significance of this place and how its significance is woven into who we are and everything we do.

This chapter outlines a comprehensive program for interpretation of the National Heritage Area that will be implemented over time through a broad-based collaboration of participating organizations and communities. Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions, addresses closely related subjects such as cultural traditions, the arts, and local agriculture. Chapter 8 addresses heritage tourism and marketing, and Chapter 9 brings these topics together as a strategy for Community Revitalization.

The Planning Foundation for Interpretation

The foundation laid during the management planning process for the interpretive programs that are addressed in this chapter is three-fold: the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s enabling legislation (Public Law 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001); goals established at the beginning of the process; and the participation of many individuals and representatives of organizations in the planning process.

The federal legislation designating the National Heritage Area provides the underlying purposes in preparing this chapter. Sec. 8001(c)(2) states that duties of Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors as managing entity include assisting local partners in:
Interpretive Goals for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Primary Goal 2: Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization:

Goal 2-6, Presentation. Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth.

Goal 2-7, Culture & Community: Protect and celebrate living heritage resources – language, art, traditions, spirituality, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.

Goal 2-8, Agriculture: Promote and interpret agriculture as a way of life, a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape, and as a critical contributor to regional economic revitalization.

Goal 2-9, Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

- Carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values;
- Establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs; and
- Increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources of the heritage area.

Based upon conversations with heritage area stakeholders during workshops held both before and during the management planning process, the Board of Directors developed a set of goals for the heritage area that are presented in Chapter 1. Interpretive goals for the heritage area focus upon using interpretation to build community pride, support cultural traditions, and provide a basis for preservation and community revitalization initiatives (see sidebar).

Further conversations led to consensus on many ideas for ways in which interpretation could be shaped within the National Heritage Area to meet its purposes and goals. These ideas provide the foundation for the more detailed interpretive framework and program presented in this chapter. Participants focused on community interpretation, support for interpretive sites, incorporating a focus on public lands and the interpretation of the valley’s natural resources, and methods and programs that would lead to a more consistent, whole interpretive experience within the National Heritage Area.

Participants made it plain that they experience culture and nature as two parts of the whole they know as the San Luis Valley, and in that vein expressed strong support for agriculture (addressed in the preceding Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions) and interpretation of the complex, largely untold story of water. They also said repeatedly in varying ways that they want the heritage area’s children (read: the valley’s children) to benefit from greater knowledge of the culture and history that will be theirs to preserve as succeeding generations of leaders and residents. Relating to the educational system and educational institutions is also addressed in Chapter 6. Visitor centers were also a frequent topic of conversation; with regard to recreation, participants saw one or more visitor centers orienting visitors to public lands and natural resources as a desirable long-term option.

Strategic Objectives for Interpretation

Interpretation is the way that this management plan differs most significantly from other kinds of regional plans. Telling the story of a region’s culture, history, and natural resources and raising public awareness about the value of that legacy – and ways to pass it on for years to come – are activities that are at the heart of the concept of a heritage area. For visitors to understand and enjoy a place, for residents to take pride in and care for that place, for students to learn about it, it is critical to provide opportunities for all to learn about and experience that place. And it is most effective to put a plan in place to do so in an organized fashion, enlisting a wide variety of partners to implement that plan’s ideas. The National Heritage Area’s approach to interpretation includes the following strategic objectives:

- Create a coordinated interpretive presentation of landscapes and sites across the heritage area using publicly accessible sites, employing a variety of interpretive media, especially audio tours and social media programs to enable landscape exploration, connect sites and communities with recommended touring routes, and bridge distances between towns and sites. Both the Old Spanish Trail and Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway provide excellent opportunities for landscape-scale touring and interpretation. This heritage area-wide approach to interpretive presentation will be especially helpful in...
the task of interpreting natural resources and public lands.

- **Create themed itineraries** on specific interpretive subjects such as significant cultures, birding, water resources, Pike’s exploration, etc., with supporting interpretive materials and media.

- **Support interpretive partners’ development** of sites, exhibits, events, and management capacity, both financially and through technical assistance.

- **Develop a strong second phase of interpretation** for Los Caminos Antiguos as a “spine” for the heritage area, concentrating on cultural and historical themes and subjects and emphasizing connections between communities. Such a program should expand the number, range, and quality of exhibits, incorporating landscaping, visitor amenities, and regionally inspired artwork. Spur tours to other close-by communities that wish to participate would provide a larger audience for communities to tell their stories and support other strategic objectives explained in other chapters.

- **Enable participating communities to tell their own stories in individual ways**, based on themes, structure, and standards provided by the National Heritage Area for the sake of consistency and region-wide experience. This approach should emphasize cultural and historical themes and the preservation of historic buildings and landscape features, reinforce local revitalization strategies, and also incorporate local and regionally inspired artwork.

- **Employ oral history** as well as story-telling by cooperating with existing oral history programs to make such productions possible and to incorporate their work into exhibits and other means of sharing with audiences.

- **Develop a living history program** with groups of actors and re-enactors who can be featured within the heritage area at events and in other ways where a critical mass of visitors can support such programming.

- **Interpret and publicize recreational walking and hiking trails** for various levels of physical abilities, including aggressive mountain hikes.

In essence, this chapter of our management plan is an interpretive plan. As such, this chapter departs from the pattern of the preceding three chapters in which the strategic objectives provide the basis for headings in the remainder of the chapters.

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**San Luis Museum and Cultural Center**

Located on a plaza in the San Luis de la Culebra National Historic District, the San Luis Museum and Cultural Center was established to interpret the history of San Luis, La Vega, the People’s Ditch, the oldest family store in the state, the town’s local heritage, and its Hispano culture and settlement. The museum houses interpretive exhibits and a diorama of the village. Additionally it has a replica of a Penitente morada, complete with religious objects and Santos (carved saints), and an extensive collection of local art, including traditional embroidery and murals. Originally constructed in 1943 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as an Institute of Arts and Crafts, the building was later used as a high school. Much of the original architecture (vigas and fireplace) is still intact. The Carlos Beaubien Theatre, located within the museum, has hosted several stage performances, presentations, and concerts. Several years ago the museum offered classes in weaving, embroidery, using hornos (outdoor earthen ovens traditionally used by both Hispanics and Native Americans), and a variety of lectures. Due to funding constraints and personnel changes, however, these programs are no longer offered. The courtyard is still used for festivals, although the museum has been closed for several years and the center is undergoing restoration. (In its future, it will become the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center and it is referred to under this name throughout this management plan.)
This chapter is based instead on the framework that should organize the heritage area’s approach to interpretation. It begins with a general discussion of the interpretive presentation for the National Heritage Area, providing guiding principles and describing potential audiences and, in general, the desired interpretive experience. It ends with a general description of the basic framework to be followed here. A companion to this general section is a discussion of the interpretive themes that will help to identify and unite the many, varied stories that it is possible to present in this National Heritage Area.

The bulk of this chapter is devoted to detailing the four basic approaches to the interpretive presentation for this National Heritage Area: (1) creating a heritage area-wide presentation; (2) presenting the stories of the heritage area’s many communities; (3) supporting interpretive sites; and (4) enhancing the experience of the natural landscape. Within these sections are specific recommendations for methods to use and actions to take; in a few cases, topics may seem to overlap, but they are meant to be tailored to the particular subject at hand. As will readily be seen below, ways to accomplish the strategic objectives listed above are woven throughout.

**An Interpretive Presentation for the National Heritage Area**

The fabric of cultural and natural resources within the National Heritage Area provides a tremendous opportunity for enhanced interpretation in support of community goals for the region. The role of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is to assist by coordinating existing interpretive sites and initiatives into an integrated experience. The National Heritage Area provides a context for interpretation, supports and facilitates local interpretive initiatives, and helps to fill gaps in interpretation where needed.

Interpretation within the heritage area addresses a series of components, each of which contributes to the interpretive experience. First among these is the spectacular landscape itself. The San Luis Valley, the Rio Grande and its tributaries, the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan Mountains, and the distinctive ecosystems throughout the landscape provide an experience that is visually spectacular yet rich and subtle in its details. This landscape is both the backdrop and the essence of everything here. The landscape should imbue each and every story we tell.

Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway is the primary means through which the landscape’s resources and experiences are threaded together. Interpretively focused upon the valley’s Hispanic culture, the byway links communities and sites within the heritage area and features orientation kiosks and interpretive waysides along its route. Los Caminos Antiguos is a key interpretive component of the heritage area and the way in which the overall landscape is experienced. The Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail, which follows part of the same route, is under development and will add to the National Heritage Area’s ability to satisfy the needs of visitors seeking to traverse the entire region.

The valley’s cultural heritage is experienced primarily through its communities. Each community has a distinctive character and distinctive stories to tell. Some communities are unique to a particular cultural group, while others clearly represent a blending of cultures. At present, community interpretation is under-developed within the heritage area and presents the greatest opportunity for enhanced interpretive experiences. Events are an important way to engage residents and visitors. In communities where there are dining, shopping, and lodging opportunities, the heritage area can become a vehicle for local economic growth and revitalization as visitors are provided reasons to explore through interpretation and other programs. Communities
without clear opportunities to benefit economically from tourism, however, are encouraged to participate, to celebrate their traditions and stories and identify ways that the heritage area can enable community enhancements.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and the Fort Garland Museum are the leading interpretive sites within the National Heritage Area. Both of these sites provide visitors with high-quality interpretive experiences, Great Sand Dunes focusing upon natural resource themes and Fort Garland focusing upon early settlement of the valley. Because they are well known and highly visited, Great Sand Dunes and Fort Garland are often a visitor’s first contact point within the valley. They therefore have a responsibility to help inform visitors of other opportunities for exploration, a responsibility they have worked to fulfill. Representatives of both sites have been active in the development of the National Heritage Area. The two sites provide leadership in crafting a high-quality heritage area interpretive experience.

The Cumbres & Toltec and Rio Grande scenic railroads are also leading visitor attractions that are of great benefit to the heritage area. Scenic railroads are popular and provide a unique way to experience the landscape. Railroads were also a defining element in shaping the valley’s history. These two railroads are great partners with which to create cooperative initiatives. They are centerpieces of the region’s visitor experience.

The National Heritage Area is home to a number of local museums including the San Luis Valley Museum, Luther Bean Museum, San Luis Museum and Cultural Center, Sanford Museum, and Jack Dempsey Museum (see sidebars and photos describing these sites throughout this chapter). Each of the heritage area’s local museums is unique in its offerings and closely tied to its community. Tailored to the interests and stories of their locale, they provide a rich, friendly, and highly personalized experience that presents the region as well as individual communities. They are important components of community interpretive planning within the communities in which they are located as well as being heritage area attractions.

In addition to Great Sand Dunes, the National Heritage Area features a number of outstanding national wildlife refuges and state wildlife areas where the valley’s unique landscapes and ecosystems can be experienced. Together with privately conserved lands, the conservation of the valley’s unique landscapes and ecosystems is one of the most important success stories in Colorado. Water is the valley’s big story, whether speaking of natural systems or the agriculture upon which communities and residents depend. Understanding the aquifers and how water works within the valley is key to understanding its ecology, its communities, and its character. At the refuges and wildlife areas, residents and visitors can get close to the plants, animals, rocks, soils, and water resources that relate this story. These are the places where details of the valley’s natural landscape are best appreciated, but due to limits in available funding, formal interpretation is modest.

Flanking the valley, the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan Mountains provide opportunities to explore environments of spectacular beauty. Numerous hiking trails are open and accessible within the national forests located in the mountains. These trails traverse varied landscapes, each a different and unique experience in its way. Under-interpreted, these trail systems present another opportunity for a set of special heritage area experiences that combine recreation and interpretation and can be enjoyable, educational, and rewarding.
The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is our opportunity to combine these interesting and outstanding components of our region into a coordinated presentation that offers many ways to experience, appreciate, and enjoy our landscape and our communities.

**Guiding Principles for Interpretation**

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s coordinating entity and partners will have responsibility for establishing a heritage area-wide overview and context for interpretation. Most detailed interpretation of heritage area themes and stories, however, will be implemented at local sites by partners over time as resources allow in accordance with a mutually agreed upon structure, criteria, and guidelines meeting standards visitors associate with National Heritage Areas. The following guiding principles should be kept in mind as we develop plans for interpretation of heritage area themes and stories.

- **Accuracy**: Interpretive content should be well-researched and accurate. What is actually known and unknown should be clearly conveyed to visitors. If stories are based upon legend, lore, or oral tradition, this should be clearly stated.

- **Authenticity of Place**: Each story should be told in the actual place where it happened, connecting the story directly to a place that is tangible and real. Authentic physical features − buildings, roads, landscape features, and other resources − should be used to tell the stories.

- **Context**: Each story should be connected to the broader historical context using heritage area themes. Stories should illustrate themes and relate to the bigger picture in ways that make them immediate and understandable. The historical context surrounding each story should be clearly communicated in broad strokes that are accurate but easily grasped. Through the context, connections can be drawn between interpretation offered at different sites.

- **Quality**: Each interpretive installation should meet a high standard of quality in terms of location, design, storytelling, and visitor experience. Partners will be responsible for maintaining quality standards at their sites.

- **Significance and Meaning**: Interpretation goes beyond the mere reciting of facts by drawing connections from a story and conveying significance and meaning to its audience. Interpretation becomes meaningful when it makes a larger point or touches a larger truth. In developing interpretive content, each story should be examined for its significance. The story’s significance should be communicated to the audience in a way that helps them connect it to their own life experiences.

- **Different Styles of Learning**: Interpretive media and techniques should be designed to acknowledge different learning styles and generational differences in how information is absorbed. A variety of possible experiences should be provided in order to satisfy the interests and capabilities of different age groups, temperaments, and orientations, including those with disabilities.

- **Differing Points of View**: Visitors should be offered stories from multiple perspectives presented in their historical context in order to help them understand how people from diverse groups and political persuasions saw things differently. Controversies that have existed should be presented from all perspectives. Visitors should not be told what to think but should be allowed to make their own decisions and draw their own conclusions.

- **Shared Human Experience**: Interpretation should be provided in ways that help audiences identify with it and relate it to experiences in their own lives. Using the authentic stories of real people in their own words in the actual places where events occurred should be encouraged wherever possible. The expression
of universal concepts such as love, loss, satisfaction, anxiety, pride, uncertainty, etc. with which everyone can empathize and relate to in their own lives helps forge a personal connection to a story.

- **Opportunities to Explore:** Audiences should be given opportunities to explore both in a physical sense and in terms of interpretive themes and stories. Themes and stories should be presented in ways that help visitors draw connections, spark interests, and encourage further investigation. Tempting leads and interpretive connections should invite visitors to move from place to place.

**Audiences**

The National Heritage Area’s goals, conceptual alternatives, and enabling legislation clearly state that the heritage area’s interpretive presentation should engage both residents and visitors. Visitors will be engaged to promote heritage tourism and support community revitalization. Residents will be engaged to reinforce community pride, preserve cultural traditions and languages, and encourage initiatives enhancing local quality of life. Different audiences have different needs and expectations. The heritage area’s interpretive experience should be capable of meeting the needs and expectations of the different types of audiences who are being engaged.

This chapter of the management plan addresses telling the heritage area’s stories. While it is focused primarily upon visitors, it is also important for residents. The heritage area’s interpretive presentation will create an interpretive presence within participating communities of which residents will be aware. Residents will be actively engaged in its design and implementation. The interest of visitors in local stories and in visiting local communities and sites should encourage residents to take pride in their heritage and preserve its resources and traditions.

Chapter 8 of this plan, Heritage Tourism and Marketing, discusses visitor experience and is closely related to this chapter. Chapter 6, Conserving Community and Traditions, focuses specifically upon programs that reach out to residential constituencies, including the region’s youth, entrepreneurs, cultural communities, artists, and agricultural interests. Those audiences and topics are therefore not included here.

The heritage area’s interpretive presentation will be phased in over time. The phasing of projects is discussed at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 10, Management and Implementation. A phased approach in marketing to target audiences is discussed in Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism and Marketing. The strategy for phased marketing is to reach out first to the audiences that can be most easily and quickly engaged and to then phase in audiences that require more planning and effort over time. Residents and existing visitors to local attractions will be the short-term priority for marketing the heritage area, awakening residents to the initiative and encouraging existing visitors to explore existing opportunities. Early implementation actions with respect to interpretation will support this initiative.

The heritage area’s mid-term priority will be to attract travelers who are passing through the valley and potential visitors that are within close driving distance, such as markets along the Front Range and in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. To attract these audiences, a basic interpretive and visitor service infrastructure must be in place, and a steady quality

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**Luther Bean Museum**

The Luther Bean Museum is located within Adams State University. It features an eclectic collection of Southwest and European art, artifacts, and local arts and history, including Native American and Hispanic Southwest arts, paintings and bronzes by nationally and regionally known artists, and European decorative arts. Also featured is also a collection of memorabilia of the former Colorado governor and ASU’s founder William H. “Billy” Adams.
level must be assured. Longer term, the heritage area will focus upon other targeted domestic and international audiences.

Each of these short, mid-, and long-term audiences includes a variety of specific groups that will be further defined as specific actions are considered. Residents will remain a priority audience in all of the National Heritage Area’s activities.

**Desired Interpretive Experience**

After experiencing the heritage area’s interpretive presentation, audiences will have a clear understanding of key themes and ideas. These themes and ideas will be presented through the variety of local stories. The following ideas represent the desired interpretive experience for all visitors and residents and may be used as benchmarks in assessing whether a planned presentation is meeting the desired goals. Upon experiencing the heritage area’s interpretive presentation, visitors should:

- Understand that the San Luis Valley is a unique landscape with significant natural systems and ecosystems worthy of conservation.
- Appreciate that the valley’s distinctive Hispanic culture is a living tradition embodied in heritage area communities and landscapes.
- Understand that a mix of cultures have combined to create the richness and diversity of the valley’s history and communities.
- Recognize the critical role that water plays in the natural landscape, agricultural landscape, valley history, and the present.
- Appreciate the impact valley stories had upon the lives of people and how they impacted the course of events.
- See stories from the perspective of others who may have different points of view.
- Be stimulated to learn more, seek additional information on their own, and explore other places within the National Heritage Area.
- Support preservation of cultural traditions and historic resources, conservation of natural landscapes, and community revitalization and enhancement.

**Interpretive Approach**

The interpretive presentation for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area will create a high-quality experience that weaves together the heritage area’s stories, communities, sites, and landscapes into a coordinated whole. Most interpretive projects and programs will be organized and implemented by local and regional partners in accordance with their particular goals and interests. The National Heritage Area board and staff will be responsible for coordinating the various initiatives as appropriate. Heritage area guidelines will help shape initiatives, and various mechanisms through which initiatives will receive support will help provide incentives for local action.

Projects and initiatives will be phased in over time as resources and capabilities permit. Marketing and visitor expectations, discussed in Chapter 8, will be carefully shaped to the level and quality of the visitor experience that can be expected during each stage of the building process.

The interpretive experience is organized into four broad areas of action based upon resource types and the partners who will be primarily responsible for implementation:

- **Heritage Area-wide Interpretation** will establish the interpretive context, will orient visitors to opportunities, will introduce heritage area themes, and will primarily be the responsibility of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area board and staff in partnership with Los Caminos Antiguos.
- **Community Interpretation** will be the primary means through which cultural stories are told, particular to each participating community, and will be implemented through local initiatives in accordance with local interests and objectives.
- **Site Interpretation** will present detailed stories appropriate to each site or museum, will illustrate heritage area themes, will have high-quality professional programs and exhibits, and will be the responsibility of individual partnering sites.
- **Natural Resource Interpretation** will tell the landscape story, will feature National Wildlife Refuges and State Wildlife Areas, will encourage recreational use of the region’s many public trails with enhanced interpretation, and will primarily be the responsibility of the heritage area’s federal and state partners.

Details of the programs to be organized within each of these four areas of activity are discussed later in this chapter.

**Interpretive Themes**

Interpretive themes are the big ideas that convey the significance about a place or subject and are the key ideas that audiences should remember. Themes help audiences connect individual stories or subjects with the broader context and connect their experiences from place to place. They help us appreciate what the stories mean and why they
Primary Theme 1: A High Desert Valley’s Wind, Water, and Sand Dunes
A High Desert Valley is the heritage area’s theme related to natural history, natural resources, and landscape. It is the foundation and context for all other interpretation. This theme can and should be conveyed everywhere within the heritage area, tying together geology, ecosystems, plant communities and their relationships to cultural development. It is closely tied to recreational opportunities and may use the driving experience as a means of conveying its stories. It should include the critical role of water as a resource and the importance of conservation initiatives within the valley.

This theme should be clearly conveyed in the heritage area’s orientation materials and exhibits. Its detailed stories are best told in the valley's federal, state, and locally-owned lands; in the national park, wildlife areas, and national forests. As such, leadership for interpretation of A High Desert Valley should come from the heritage area local coordinating entity in partnership with federal and state land managers.

Theme Statement
The delicate interplay of wind, water, and sand have shaped the San Luis Valley’s unique landforms and contributed to its biological diversity. Though receiving little rainfall, the Valley’s hidden aquifers support extensive wetlands that are home to globally unique plant and animal species and are a migration stopover for many birds.

Potential Interpretive Subjects
- Platoro Caldera
- Rio Grande Watershed
- Rio Grande Rift
- San Luis Valley Aquifer
- Valley Ecosystems
- Conservation & Water Policy
- San Luis Hills
- Sangre de Cristo Mountains
- Artesian Wetlands & Lakes
- Semidesert Shrublands
- San Juan Mountains
- Migratory Birds
- Ice Age Glaciers

Primary Theme 2: Land of the Blue Sky People
The theme Land of the Blue Sky People relates to the Native American association with the San Luis Valley. It is named in honor of the Utes as the most recent tribe to be closely associated with the valley, but it also relates to other tribes such as the Navajo (to whom the valley and Mt Blanca have religious significance), Puebloans (Tewa, Hopi, for whom the San Luis lakes have religious significance), Jicarilla Apache, and thousands of years of Paleo-Indian occupation. This theme is closely associated with the natural resources theme, A High Desert Valley, and can be interpreted at appropriate sites almost anywhere within the heritage area.

Neither prehistoric cultures nor the Utes or other Native American tribes established permanent settlements within the valley, and no tribal communities live within the valley today. Tribal participation in interpretation and preservation must be encouraged. Interpretively, this theme is somewhat ephemeral, as there are few tangible cultural resources that can be used to tell its stories. Archeological sites and the valley’s very fragile rock petroglyph sites are not publicly advertised nor made accessible due to their rarity and the potential for vandalism. Natural resource features such as Mount Blanca, the San Luis Lakes, Rio Grande, and peeled bark forest of Great Sand Dunes National Park are most appropriate for use in telling stories of Native American occupation. Heritage area-wide interpretive exhibits and exhibits at federal and state sites are appropriate venues for this interpretation.

Theme Statement
Interwoven with the Valley’s natural history is a very long and rich human history. The San Luis Valley served prehistoric and Native American cultures as a seasonal hunting ground where fowl, game, and edible and medicinal plants were bountiful. Select landscape features within the Valley have long been revered as sacred.

Potential Interpretive Subjects
- Creation Myths
- Stone Quarrying
- Tribal Competition
- Petroglyphs
- Religious Practice
- Living off the Land
- Settlement Conflict
- Artifacts
- Seasonal Hunting
- Paleo-Indian Occupation
- Bison Kills
- Tribal Relations Today
**Primary Theme 3: Interwoven Peoples and Traditions**

The San Luis Valley is renowned for the many cultures that have made it home. Native American, Hispano, Anglo, Mormon, Japanese-American, Dutch, and, recently, Amish cultures have all influenced the valley at various periods of its history. The theme Interwoven Peoples and Traditions tells the stories of these cultures and of the people who came here. It is an all encompassing and living theme that relates the overall history of the valley’s development.

Taking off where Theme 2 ends, Interwoven Peoples and Traditions begins with the story of early Spanish exploration. It relates the experiences of Hispano families in their early settlement initiatives; the story of Mexican land grants; conflicts with Native Americans; the acquisition of the valley by the United States; the construction of railroads; the subsequent westward expansion of Anglo settlers into the region; and the development of the communities, businesses, and agricultural development that have resulted in the valley we know today. The theme includes discussion of contemporary struggles with respect to water rights and traditional access to land. The unique stories of Hispano settlement and their historic cultural traditions are particularly important to this theme and lay the groundwork for interpretation of Theme 4 on contemporary Hispano culture and communities. Interwoven Peoples and Traditions is a heritage area-wide theme. The National Heritage Area as a whole will set the context for telling its stories, but its numerous, varied stories will primarily be told through community interpretation and interpretation at specific sites. Each participating community and site will tell its own stories filling in subjects covered by the theme. The National Heritage Area will set the overall context, facilitate and coordinate storytelling between communities and sites, and fill gaps in the storytelling where necessary.

**Theme Statement**

The San Luis Valley is a place where different peoples have converged for thousands of years. The Valley’s profound historical, religious, and cultural convergence remains visible in the landscape and can be experienced in its communities, art, food, lodging, and events.

**Potential Interpretive Subjects**

| Spanish Exploration | Spanish and Mexican Culture | Mexican Land Grants |
| American Exploration | Early Settlement Patterns | Hispanic Agricultural Traditions |
| Land Speculation | Trails and Early Roads | U.S. Military Forts |
| Agriculture | Railroads & Mines | Mormon Traditions |
| US Policy and Regulation | Valley Communities | Mixed Cultures |
| | Water and Rights | Traditional Access to Land |

**Primary Theme 4: Hispano Culture: Folklore, Religion and Language**

Interpretation of the unique Hispano culture of the San Luis Valley was a primary motive for creation of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as well as Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway. The theme Hispano Culture will therefore be a primary focus of heritage area interpretation. The geographic focus of the Hispano theme is the southern portions of Costillo and Conejos Counties, and the most appropriate places for its presentation are their Hispano communities. The theme Hispano Culture is a living theme. It embraces the stories of historic Hispano settlement of the valley included in Theme 3, Interwoven Peoples and Traditions, but it is primarily about the nature of the Hispano community and culture today. While heritage area-wide interpretation will set the context and interpret remote sites and resources, this theme will primarily be interpreted within today’s Hispano communities by the communities themselves. Each community wishing to participate will be asked to prepare an interpretive plan with guidance and support from the National Heritage Area and will then receive support in its implementation. These community-based initiatives will be closely related to the heritage area’s community engagement and community enhancement initiatives.

**Theme Statement**

The lower San Luis Valley lies at the intersection of the Hispano Southwest and Anglo Rocky Mountain West where the flavor of Hispano culture thrives. The Valley’s relative isolation has preserved a living cultural tradition where art, language, architecture, folklore, and religious traditions remain evocative of the region’s early Spanish colonists and Mexican settlers.

**Potential Interpretive Subjects**

| Religion | Language | Music, Art, Crafts |
| Architecture | Cultural Traditions | Festivals |
| Food-ways | Agriculture | Folklore |
| Water and Acequias | Settlement Patterns | Education |
Themes help connect stories told in different places with a common thread.

Every interpretive exhibit or presentation within the heritage area should be developed with one of the primary interpretive themes in mind, illustrating the particular theme it relates to. Audiences should be reminded of the theme when possible. Each exhibit or presentation should have a key message or sub-theme that summarizes its purpose and gives its story meaning and relevance within the context of the heritage area as a whole.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Feasibility Study describes four primary themes that create the thematic structure for heritage area interpretation. The preceding two special pages present a summary of each theme along with a theme statement and a list of relevant subjects. These four themes capture the essence of the San Luis Valley and reflect events and movements that have been significant in the history of the United States. Each of the primary interpretive themes provides the opportunity to convey and connect a range of interesting and significant subjects and stories by partnering communities, attractions, and sites. A discussion of the themes and resources associated with them from the Feasibility Study is included in Appendix G of this management plan.

As they seek support and assistance in shaping their interpretation within the context of the National Heritage Area, partners should be asked to identify the key message or sub-theme for the subject they are interpreting and how it relates to the primary theme. Messages, sub-themes, and interpretive content should be reviewed for accuracy by qualified naturalists, historians, educators, and professional interpreters within the region.

**Heritage Area-wide Presentation**

Heritage area-wide elements of the interpretive presentation will establish the overall context and will primarily be the responsibility of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area board and staff working with various partners. Its purpose is to:

- Establish a heritage area-wide presence that is apparent to residents and visitors;
- Orient visitors to opportunities;
- Introduce the heritage area’s four primary themes, setting the context for local community and site interpretation;
- Provide physical and interpretive linkages between communities and sites;

Established in 1858 and commanded by legendary frontiersman Kit Carson, Fort Garland had a garrison of more than 100 men and served to protect the earliest settlers in the San Luis Valley. Original adobe buildings on the grounds (including the barracks pictured here), exhibits on infantry, cavalry, and Buffalo Soldiers stationed at the fort, an authentic 1871 stagecoach, and historic dioramas offer visitors a memorable experience of American western history. Fort Garland is one of the major interpretive sites in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (see Appendix F).
• Keep visitors engaged as they move through the landscape among communities and sites;
• Fill gaps in interpretation, telling significant stories that are not told elsewhere; and
• Encourage visitors to explore.

All four of the National Heritage Area’s primary interpretive themes will support local community and site interpretation. Two themes, A High Desert Valley and Land of the Blue Sky People, interpret the overall landscape context – important to appreciation of all of the themes. These two themes will be featured at particular locations, but they may also be applied practically anywhere within the heritage area. They are appropriate as subjects for driving tours along the heritage area’s byway and road networks and can be used to interpret the landscape while driving, informing visitors as they experience the changing landscape and drive the distances between communities and sites.

**ACTION:** Create a heritage area-wide interpretive presence that establishes the interpretive context for residents and visitors. Incorporate appropriate elements over time as opportunities, resources, and partnerships suggest.

The following elements are possible components of a heritage area-wide interpretive presentation.

### Heritage Area Website
Build upon the existing Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area website by using the website as a medium for interpretation. Provide additional discussion of the four heritage area themes and add detailed interpretive content on various subjects and stories, particularly those that set the context for local community and site interpretation. Consider the website an educational resource where residents and visitors can go for historical information. Link to partner websites that provide interpretive content related to their sites or subjects. Partnering sites should adapt their websites to link and coordinate heritage area-wide.

Create a series of interactive maps identifying sites related to specific themes and stories and illustrating historic content. Provide media downloads of maps, itineraries, information on events, historical information, and interpretive content. The website should be a primary source for heritage area interpretation and information and should be updated regularly as new initiatives are introduced. Consider coordinating with the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors initiative and National Geographic maps and website.

**ACTION:** Use the heritage area website as a medium for interpretation. Build the website’s interpretive content over time covering key themes and stories in increasing detail and coordinating with participating communities and sites.

### Family of Heritage Area-wide Publications
Create a family of heritage area publications over time using a consistent graphic format. Begin with a yearly seasonal guide (discussed in Chapter 8) in a fold-out format similar to the NPS seasonal newspaper used by the Great Sand Dunes. Experiment with presentations and formats, adapting to change as a new guide is published each year.

Over time, develop additional supporting publications. Include a large heritage area-wide map with visitor information and interpretive content that folds into brochure format. Create community brochures for individual participating communities. Develop a landscape guide to the San Luis Valley as discussed below. Create special itineraries for special subjects of interest to particular visitors, such as historic churches, birding, arts and crafts, etc., as discussed below and in Chapter 8. In association with Adams State University and the San Luis Valley Historical Society, consider publishing new monographs on historic subjects of particular interest.

**ACTION:** Create a coordinated family of publications interpreting the National Heritage Area and partnering communities and sites. Build the family of publications over time.

### Landscape Guide
Publish a short guide to the San Luis Valley landscape as a companion piece to the heritage area map mentioned above and to provide context for exhibits at natural resource sites and along driving tour routes. Envisioned as a booklet format, the guide should describe each of the unique landscape areas within the heritage area’s portion of the valley, including landforms, geology, plant communities,
ACTION: Publish a guide to the San Luis Valley landscape describing the unique landscape areas within the National Heritage Area, including landforms, geology, plant communities, and wildlife.

Family of Entrance, Wayfinding, and Exhibit Signage

The National Heritage Area should develop a family of signage types and graphic formats that can be used heritage area-wide to provide consistency and help establish a visual presence. It should include entrance signs, wayfinding signs, kiosks, waysides, identification signs, and other formats as deemed appropriate. Implement the system over time. Signage should be durable and sustainable.

Entrance and wayfinding signage, while not interpretation, is important in helping to create a visual presence that identifies the National Heritage Area as a unique and special place. It can contribute greatly to the interpretive presence to be communicated to residents and visitors. Entrance signs using the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s graphic identity should be installed along major roads entering into the heritage area. Wayfinding signage using the heritage area’s graphic format should be developed for the heritage area’s driving routes and should provide directions to communities and sites. A combined graphic format could be developed along Los Caminos Antiguos. Partnering communities and sites should be offered the opportunity of having heritage area-styled identification signage should they desire it. Alternately, signs noting affiliation with the National Heritage Area, such as those provided to designated Preserve America communities, could be provided. Entrance and wayfinding signage is also discussed in Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism and Marketing.

ACTION: Develop a family of signage types and graphic formats to be used heritage area-wide, including entrance signs, wayfinding signs, kiosks, waysides, identification signs, and others as appropriate.

Orientation Exhibits

Outdoor orientation kiosks should be installed at prominent locations in the four Cornerstone Communities of Antonito, San Luis, Fort Garland, and Alamosa. The orientation kiosks should have a minimum of three large interpretive panels in the National Heritage Area’s graphic format. One map should feature a heritage area-wide orientation map with smaller local maps showing details of the vicinity. Two of the panels should introduce the four heritage area themes, connecting to community and site interpretation, and provide information on visitor opportunities.

Similar kiosks should be installed near the visitor center at Great Sand Dunes National Park and in Hooper, which is a northern entrance into the National Heritage Area. Smaller versions of the four primary orientation kiosks should be installed in other participating communities and sites.
Orientation kiosks and signage can be adapted to work with existing signage where appropriate. For example, Fort Garland’s visitor information center has existing panels with a map of the valley and interpretation of the valley, Fort Garland, and Buffalo Soldiers. New heritage area signage can be designed to work with and complement these existing panels.

Orientation kiosks should be located at places that are visible, easily accessible, and pedestrian friendly. They should include landscape amenities such as special paving, benches, landscaping, and lighting. Kiosks should be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

**ACTION:** Install outdoor orientation kiosks in the four Cornerstone Communities to welcome visitors, provide information, introduce the heritage area’s primary themes, and orient visitors to driving tours, sites, and communities.

### Los Caminos Antiguos Interpretive Exhibits

Los Caminos Antiguos is the backbone of the National Heritage Area experience, connecting landscapes, communities, and sites throughout the heritage area. The byway should continue to be the primary means for creating heritage area-wide linkages. Hispano themes and subjects have been the primary interpretive focus of Los Caminos Antiguos, which should continue. In addition, it is proposed that landscape interpretation be introduced to the byway to provide visitors with a context for the cultural themes as they drive.

Recommendations for interpretation at specific sites along Los Caminos Antiguos are included in the byway’s 1999 corridor management plan. This plan has been partially implemented. It is important that the plan continue to be implemented in order to provide enough interpretive content along the byway to create a visitor experience with sufficient critical mass. Interpretation of the valley landscape should be developed to complement the recommendations included in the existing plan. Landscape interpretation should include both the natural landscape and cultural landscape, especially historic and modern agricultural features and practices. The Old Spanish Trail should also be interpreted through byway exhibits.

Appropriate landscape amenities should be installed at the byway’s interpretive sites to give the sites a strong visual presence. Amenities might include paving, fencing, benches, bollards or placed boulders, and landscaping. Media downloads from the heritage area website would be appropriate for added interpretation at specific sites and to provide an audio component for the driving tour. The proposed heritage area fold-out map, discussed above under the family of publications, should feature Los Caminos Antiguos and related interpretive content. The map could replace the existing byway brochure.

Implementation initiatives along the byway are the responsibility of the Board of Directors of Los Caminos Antiguos. The National Heritage Area should work closely
with the byway’s board in developing and implementing additional interpretation.

**ACTION:** Collaborate with Los Caminos Antiguos to complete implementation of the byway’s interpretive plan and to add additional interpretation presenting the valley’s natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes.

**Branch Routes**

Additional branches should be added to Los Caminos Antiguos to provide linkages to communities and sites not directly on the byway and to complete a circular connection from Alamosa to Antonito. Only communities that have expressed a desire to participate in the National Heritage Area program and that have met basic criteria for presentation and visitor experience should be connected to the byway route.

**ACTION:** Designate additional driving routes as branches to Los Caminos Antiguos to provide linkages to communities and sites not directly on the byway and to complete a circular connection.

**Themed Itineraries and Driving Tours**

Themed itineraries and driving tours should be developed for special subjects and audiences with special interests. These itineraries should be presented in special brochures and through media downloads from the heritage area website. Other supporting interpretive materials may be desirable, and the itineraries could be the subject of special guided tours. Themed itineraries and driving tours may be developed over time as deemed appropriate. Themed itineraries might include such subjects as:

- Hispano churches and religious sites
- Hispanic agriculture
- Arts and crafts
- Valley agriculture
- Mormon settlements
- Valley railroads
- Birding
- Local foods
- Water resources

**ACTION:** Develop themed itineraries and driving tours for special subjects and audiences with special interests.

**Community Presentations**

Community interpretation is the primary means through which the National Heritage Area’s cultural themes will be presented. While heritage area-wide interpretation is intended to set the context, community interpretation provides richness and detail through numerous stories, community by community, illustrating themes and sub-themes and getting at the core of the valley’s stories. Community interpretation should enthrall visitors and become the hallmark of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area experience.

Each valley community is different. A full range of stories will be represented through the participation of many communities. Each individual community should be encouraged to bring its own stories into the light of public appreciation and to fill its special place within the thematic structure. The themes Interwoven Peoples and Traditions and Hispano Culture should be the primary subjects of community interpretation, and communities should be the primary places where stories interpreting these themes will be told.

Interpretation and visitor services combine to form the core of what this plan calls “visitor experience.” The heritage area management plan proposes three levels of community participation. The purpose of this system is to enlist communities in building up the heritage area’s visitor experience as a whole and achieving a reputation for high-quality experiences through their participation. In return,
communities gain local recognition, boost residents’ pride in and appreciation for their resources and stories, and have a new way to express community creativity. Also in return, they can compete for heritage area assistance for their top-priority projects and gain promotion through the heritage area’s efforts to guide visitors to participating communities according to the visitors’ needs, expectations, and interests. The community designation system is discussed further in Chapter 9, Community Revitalization.

To participate, a community should first evaluate its visitor services using criteria set by the National Heritage Area and determine how much it wishes to work on an interpretive presentation, again following heritage area guidance. The community should then create a brief plan of action, seek designation or acknowledgment of its status, and begin work on its top-priority actions, seeking National Heritage Area assistance as appropriate and as local and heritage area resources can be made available.

In general, communities without visitor services have equal access to the National Heritage Area’s assistance in interpretive development. That is, no matter where a community finds itself within this community-designation system, once it is on a footing of participation, the community has an equal opportunity to compete for heritage area help. A process for becoming a designated heritage area community and receiving planning and implementation assistance will be established by the National heritage Area in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this chapter. The National Heritage Area may vary its criteria for awarding such assistance depending on where it sees opportunities for especially effective use of resources in making significant progress for the heritage area as a whole. During the startup phase, for example, the National Heritage Area may set priorities for resource allocation based on community visibility and readiness to provide a high-quality visitor experience, and focus on such things as visitor services, hospitality training, wayfinding, or visitor orientation. Other criteria at other times might be based on theme, local investment, type of project (helping to provide variety in the visitor experience), number of partners collaborating, etc.

**Cornerstone Communities**

Cornerstone Communities are communities located near entry points into the heritage area and are communities capable of providing a full range of visitor services. They will be asked to host orientation exhibits for visitors and to provide a high level of community interpretation featuring creative, resident inspired exhibits, artwork, and streetscape enhancements. Each should also provide a local visitor center providing visitor information. Proposed Cornerstone Communities are located at the four corners of the National Heritage Area and include Antonito, San Luis, Fort Garland, and Alamosa. The establishment of a high-quality visitor experience in these four communities is an essential component for this plan’s goal of strengthening heritage tourism within the region.

**Valley Communities**

Valley Communities are other communities within the National Heritage Area offering visitor services. Participation is totally voluntary but will be undertaken in accordance with heritage area criteria. A minimum level of visitor services required for designation includes a restaurant (or food market where take-out meals may be purchased) and the availability of public restrooms. The National
Heritage Area establishes minimum standards for quality and hospitality training with respect to visitor services. Participating communities are expected to interpret their stories. Representative Valley Communities include La Jara, Manassa, Sanford, and Blanca. Hooper has a special Valley Community role as a northern entrance into the National Heritage Area.

**Heritage Communities**

Heritage Communities are communities without visitor services that wish to participate in the National Heritage Area’s interpretive presentation. These include many historically significant communities with important stories that are central to the San Luis Valley’s historical experience. These communities should be strongly encouraged to participate in the interpretive presentation. The means through which interpretation is offered will be customized to each community’s interests and shaped to engage the participation of residents. Community engagement initiatives, discussed in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition, may take precedence over interpretation to visitors depending upon the desires and capabilities of the community.

Every National Heritage Area community is encouraged to participate in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area interpretive presentation. Participating communities are expected to be welcoming to visitors. Each participating community will be asked to prepare an interpretive plan with heritage area support, and guidelines for participating communities will ensure authenticity and a high-quality experience. Existing attractions such as museums within and close to participating communities will collaborate in the interpretive presentations and are encouraged to forge close ties with their host communities.

**ACTION:** Implement a system of community interpretation as a central component of the National Heritage Area interpretive presentation. Each community is encouraged and supported in development of its interpretive presentation and visitor experience in accordance with its interests and capabilities.

The following elements will be encouraged as possible components of community interpretive presentations.

**Community Interpretive Plan**

Every community is welcome to participate in the National Heritage Area’s interpretive presentation. In the start-up phase, priority may be given to those communities that are essential in establishing a basic heritage area-wide visitor experience. This includes the four Cornerstone Communities, which are essential to a core heritage area-wide presentation to visitors. Valley and Heritage Communities will be brought on to broaden and enrich the presentation. Criteria and expectations for each level of participation are different, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, and combine orientation, interpretation, and visitor service components. Programs will be customized to the interests and capabilities of each individual community. Community engagement initiatives, discussed in Chapter 6, may take priority over interpretation for visitors in Heritage Communities.

Each community wishing to participate in the heritage area presentation is asked to prepare a brief community interpretive plan in accordance with National Heritage Area guidelines. The National Heritage Area and its partners...
may provide technical assistance in the preparation of the interpretive plans. The community interpretive plans should:

- Outline the community’s historical significance;
- Identify local interpretive sites and attractions that are participating in the community presentation;
- Identify the themes, sub-themes, and stories that the community can best tell;
- Describe a conceptual approach for the interpretive presentation including how the presentation relates to community revitalization strategies;
- Identify authentic buildings and sites that will be used to convey key stories;
- Identify publicly accessible locations where exhibits may be installed and stories told;
- Identify the means and media through which interpretation will be offered;
- Outline how the community presentation will be phased, including potential costs, and the extent of proposed phase 1 work to establish a core presentation.

The plans should coordinate community interpretation with heritage area-wide initiatives and with the interpretation of other communities and sites. Interpretive attractions such as museums located in and close to a community are asked to participate in the interpretive plan and implementation. A phased implementation program should be established in accordance with heritage area-wide priorities. Upon completion of the interpretive plan, the community and the National Heritage Area will undertake its implementation as resources become available.

**ACTION:** Communities wishing to participate in the National Heritage Area’s interpretive program should prepare interpretive plans in accordance with heritage area guidelines and with heritage area assistance.

**Introductory Exhibits**

The development of orientation exhibits in the four Cornerstone Communities are a heritage area-wide initiative, as discussed above, to be undertaken in partnership with the four communities. Introductory exhibits should be installed in other participating communities as well and should be incorporated into their interpretive planning. The introductory exhibits may vary in size and complexity community by community, but each should relate its community to the heritage area-wide themes and context, convey the community’s overall significance, introduce key stories, and provide a connection to local exhibits and other visitor offerings and opportunities. The exhibits should use the National Heritage Area’s graphic format. Like orientation exhibits, they should be placed in visible and easily accessible locations and should be associated with landscape amenities.

**ACTION:** Install introductory exhibits in each participating community relating the community to heritage area-wide interpretation.
Local Interpretive Sites
Local interpretive sites and visitor attractions, such as museums, within and close to communities should participate in the development of community interpretive plans, should be key elements in their presentation, and should help facilitate implementation. Local interpretive sites serve as local destinations where rich interpretive experiences can be offered. Themes and stories presented at local sites should be closely coordinated with other forms of community interpretation.

ACTION: Local interpretive sites and attractions within and close to communities should participate in the development of community interpretive plans and in their implementation.

Outdoor Interpretive Exhibits
Participating communities are encouraged to develop a network of outdoor interpretive exhibits that present the communities’ stories as a primary vehicle for community interpretation. The network of outdoor exhibits should be described conceptually in the community interpretive plan and may be phased in over time. Exhibits may range from simple signs or waysides to complex installations. They should be located in publicly accessible places and be ADA compliant. The installation of landscape and streetscape enhancements in association with exhibits is desirable. The network of exhibits should work together to provide a comprehensive presentation of the community’s history and significance.

Outdoor interpretive exhibits should use the National Heritage Area’s graphic format and family of signage types.

The exhibits should feature authentic places such as historic buildings and natural features, using the places and the stories of local residents to illustrate community themes and significance. The use of first person accounts is highly desirable.

ACTION: Each community participating in the National Heritage Area’s interpretive presentation should create a network of outdoor interpretive exhibits presenting the community’s history and significance.

Historic Buildings and Landscapes
The preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings and landscapes within a community helps convey the community’s character and significance and has interpretive value as well as value in creating a high-quality visitor experience. The development of community interpretive plans will be coordinated with preservation and revitalization initiatives that support and enhance story-telling and visitor experience. Historic buildings and landscape features will be used to tell the community’s stories.

ACTION: Use historic buildings and landscape features within the community to tell the community’s stories.

Outdoor Art Installations
The strong cultural traditions of the San Luis Valley have created unique artistic impulses that have found expression historically and continue to be expressed today. The National Heritage Area is a place where artists should be encouraged to thrive, and locally created artistic installations should be an important component of community interpretation. Like the physical character of the community, artwork is a way to express interpretive concepts that goes beyond photos and text. Communities are encouraged to use local artists to create artwork associated with community interpretive themes that can be installed along with interpretive exhibits or as stand-alone installations. The locations, goals, and criteria for artistic installations should be outlined in community interpretive plans. Support for local artists is discussed further in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition.

ACTION: Use artwork as a key component of community interpretation.

Interpretive Publications
As part of the family of heritage area-wide publications discussed in a previous section of this chapter, community brochures should be developed as a component of each community interpretive initiative. Simple brochures using
a similar National Heritage Area graphic format should be created for each participating community. Like introductory exhibits, the brochures should relate the community to the heritage area-wide context, introduce its key stories, and identify places where additional interpretation or other experiences are offered. The brochures should have a community map, use historic photographs, and may identify where visitor services may be found. Additional interpretive publications such as books or pamphlets on community history or key places are encouraged and may be developed by communities over time as they deem appropriate. Outline the range of desired interpretive publications in community interpretive plans.

**Festivals and Events**
Festivals and events are representative of the National Heritage Area’s living culture and traditions and should be an important component of community interpretation. A calendar of events should be maintained and promoted by the National Heritage Area on its website, in publications, and through media releases. While festivals and events are primarily the responsibility of local partners and communities, the National Heritage Area should help coordinate so that events are not competing with each other and should include support for festivals and events in its small grant program for promotion and to help defray costs.

**Community Arts and Crafts**
Encouraging the growth of local arts and crafts through entrepreneurship is addressed in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition. Like the proposed artistic installations discussed above, community arts and crafts should be considered a part of a community’s interpretive presentation. Within the heritage area’s Hispanic communities, local arts and crafts help convey the contemporary theme of Hispano Culture. In other communities, they convey other aspects of the valley’s rich culture and quality of life. Local entrepreneurship is an important part of the economic development of local communities and should be included in community interpretive planning.

**Living History and Cultural Presentations**
Heritage area-wide and local partners should be encouraged to work together to develop living history and cultural experiences that can be offered in participating communities. Partners might include local theater groups, Adams State University, historic site interpreters, re-enactors, cultural and religious groups, and individual enthusiasts. Living history and cultural presentations may be offered at festivals and events or may be regularly scheduled as visitor attractions during summer months.

**ACTION:** Develop a heritage area-wide network of living history and cultural presentations that may be offered in communities and sites during festivals and events.

An exquisitely detailed quilt depicting Conejos County’s history hangs in the county courthouse. Quilting is a long tradition and a major source of expression for modern artists in the heritage area.
Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Management Plan
Heritage Area Interpretation

SUPPORT FOR INTERPRETIVE SITES
The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is home to a wide variety of existing sites and attractions that offer interpretation of the heritage area’s history and landscapes. Existing interpretive sites range from large regionally prominent attractions offering professional interpretive programming, to small local museums run by dedicated volunteers, to self-guided sites featuring outdoor exhibits. The National Heritage Area seeks to engage all of these sites and attractions in its interpretive presentation.

Existing interpretive sites are asked to identify the heritage area interpretive themes that their stories represent. Sites that are located close to or within communities are asked to participate in the development and implementation of community interpretive plans, mentioned above, in which they will be featured components. Sites that are remotely located or whose subject matter is related most closely to heritage area-wide themes, such as natural resource sites, will be coordinated into the heritage area-wide presentation.

The National Heritage Area should support the development and sustainability of existing interpretive sites through cooperative programming, promotion, technical assistance, small grants, and collaborative fundraising. These sites in turn are expected to be interpretive leaders within the heritage area, collaborating with other sites that share their themes and stories; establishing and maintaining high standards of presentation, programming, hospitality, and collaboration with the arts; and serving as mentors to other sites.

ACTION: Incorporate the National Heritage Area’s interpretive sites and attractions into community interpretive plans and heritage area-wide interpretive presentations.

ACTION: Encourage interpretive sites to work collaboratively for mutual support and assistance.

The following elements are proposed as components of a program to engage and support existing interpretive sites.

Self Assessments
Existing interpretive sites and attractions are asked to complete brief self assessments in accordance with National Heritage Area guidelines. The self assessments should:

• State the site’s mission and goals;
• Identify heritage area themes relevant to the site;
• Describe existing programming;
• Describe facilities and visitor services that are available at the site;
• Describe planned initiatives; and
• Outline issues and needs with which the heritage area and partners might assist.

Each site is asked to state how it is interested in participating in the National Heritage Area initiative. Based upon mutual interests, a cooperative agreement should be executed between the site and the National Heritage Area affirming the site’s interest in working in collaboration with other National Heritage Area partners in a heritage area-wide interpretive presentation and confirming that the site will abide by heritage area principles.

ACTION: Existing interpretive sites should prepare brief self-assessments that describe existing conditions and programming and outline how the site wishes to participate in the National Heritage Area program.

ACTION: Execute a cooperative agreement in which the site affirms its interest in working in collaboration with other National Heritage Area partners in a heritage area-wide interpretive

Historic water tower at the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad site in Antonito. This nationally significant narrow-gauge railroad segment exists as one of only two operating sections of what was once a statewide network of three-foot-gauge tracks built and operated by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Completed in 1880, the 64-mile line helped to sustain the ranching and logging activities in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado and formed a link for the transportation of precious metals from the San Juan mining camps to Denver. This important interpretive attraction and others described throughout this chapter (and in Appendix F) can benefit from greater coordination, promotion, and investment by the National Heritage Area.
presentation and will abide by heritage area principles.

**Introductory Exhibits**
Each participating site is asked to host an introductory exhibit similar to those to be installed in communities setting the site into context with respect to heritage area-wide interpretation and connecting the site to heritage area themes and other interpretive sites. The introductory exhibits could be interior or exterior exhibits and should use the National Heritage Area graphic identity.

**ACTION:** Install introductory exhibits at participating sites introducing the National Heritage Area, setting the context for site interpretation relative to heritage area themes, and drawing connections to other interpretive sites.

**Interpretive Enhancements**
The National Heritage Area may assist sites in planning and implementing interpretive enhancements that support the heritage area experience. Support might come in the form of grants, technical assistance, or other means and might include exhibits, programming, publications, media enhancements, or other forms of interpretive presentation. Support will be based upon the availability of resources and heritage area-wide priorities.

**ACTION:** Provide support to sites in planning and implementing interpretive enhancements that support the heritage area experience in accordance with the availability of resources and heritage area priorities.

**Cooperative Programming**
Partnering sites within the National Heritage Area will work together to plan and implement cooperative programming and interpretive initiatives. Such programming might include coordinated interpretive exhibits, events, special tours, joint interpretive publications or media presentations, or other initiatives. As discussed above, sites located within or close to participating communities are expected to collaborate with those communities in interpretive planning and implementation. The National Heritage Area will include participating sites in its heritage area-wide marketing and interpretive materials, website, and promotional initiatives.

**ACTION:** Partnering sites within the National Heritage Area will work together to plan and implement cooperative programming and interpretive initiatives.

**Interpretive Workshops**
The National Heritage Area will facilitate periodic workshops in which sites may meet to discuss approaches to interpretation, share ideas, and build cooperative relationships. The workshops may feature educational and training sessions on topics of mutual interest. Topics may range from interpretive programming to site management to fund-raising or other issues.

**ACTION:** Organize workshops for participating sites to facilitate communication and offer educational and technical training.

**Technical Assistance**
The National Heritage Area and its partners will provide technical assistance to participating sites to the extent possible. Technical assistance may be related to interpretation, programming, site management, operations, fund-raising and other subjects of mutual interest. Through discussion, the interests and needs of individual sites will be established and ways in which assistance can be offered will be developed.

**ACTION:** Provide technical assistance to participating sites in accordance with interests, needs, and the availability of resources.

**Site Improvements**
The National Heritage Area will support sites as they plan and seek funding for implementation of site improvements that support interpretation and visitor experience. It is not anticipated that the National Heritage Area will provide direct funding for construction projects, but participation in
the heritage area program with its broad-based community goals will provide a basis for seeking funding from a variety of sources, and projects that are consistent with the heritage area vision will receive heritage area support in various ways.

**ACTION:** Support sites as they plan and seek funding for implementation of site improvements that support interpretation and visitor experience.

**Collaboration with Communities**

Interpretive sites should not only collaborate in the planning and implementation of community interpretive programming, they should also participate in such initiatives as festivals, events, living history presentations, and programs in traditional arts and crafts.

**ACTION:** Facilitate coordination between interpretive sites and communities in programming such as festivals and events.

**EXPERIENCING OUR NATURAL LANDSCAPES**

The San Luis Valley is well known for its phenomenal landscape and unique ecosystems. The valley’s landscape is the setting and context for all of its interpretive themes. At present, interpretation of the valley’s natural landscape is piecemeal, undertaken very well in a few locations while non-existent at others. Its cultural landscape is barely interpreted at all. The landscape should play a role in the interpretation of most themes and subjects within the National Heritage Area. Interesting aspects of the natural landscape are prevalent everywhere, especially in remote areas. The landscape interpretation is well-suited to presentation through driving tours.

Because of its pervasiveness, this plan proposes that heritage area-wide interpretation, discussed above, present the overall context and significance of the landscape as essential to an understanding of the valley and its culture. The National Heritage Area’s natural resource sites (the national park, wildlife areas, and refuges), included above under the discussion of site interpretation, will take the lead in the detailed interpretation of the significant resources with which they are specifically associated.

There are, however, many publicly accessible places within the valley and adjacent mountains where additional interpretation can be implemented, often in association with recreational opportunities. Interpretation of the heritage area landscape should be undertaken in close cooperation with the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors initiative currently being organized by valley communities and partners, as described in Chapter 5, Recreation and Conservation.

This plan proposes that an increased emphasis upon the combination of recreation and interpretation of natural resources will be appealing to an important segment of the visiting public. New interpretive and walking/hiking initiatives will be undertaken on publicly owned lands within the valley and in the adjacent mountains.

In particular the numerous back-country trails in the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains provide an opportunity for attracting outdoor enthusiasts. At present, these trails are not well publicized, and little information is available on their character, resources, and experience. By providing high quality maps and easily accessed information about the trails combined with detailed interpretation, they will become a significant added venue for experiencing the National Heritage Area’s natural environment. Implementation of this idea will be a combined initiative of the National Heritage Area board and staff and the federal and state agencies managing the natural areas.

**ACTION:** Undertake a comprehensive program for enhanced interpretation of the National Heritage Area’s natural landscape in partnership with state and federal agencies featuring publicly owned lands.

**ACTION:** Coordinate interpretation of the heritage area landscape in close cooperation with the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors initiative.

The following elements are proposed to support interpretation of the landscape and the National Heritage Area’s natural resources.
Landscape Guide and Exhibits
Development of a landscape guide, website interpretation, additional interpretive publications, and landscape interpretation along Los Caminos Antiguos and branch routes is discussed above under heritage area-wide interpretation. These initiatives will provide the overall context for understanding of the National Heritage Area’s landscape and set the stage for more detailed collaborative interpretation of the landscape by partners.

**ACTION:** Introduce interpretation of the natural landscape through heritage area-wide interpretation to set the context for the interpretation of cultural themes and stories as outlined in the section above on heritage area-wide interpretation.

Natural Resource Interpretive Sites
Existing natural resource sites will take the lead in detailed interpretation of natural features and ecosystems at their sites, illustrating themes and subjects associated with the larger San Luis Valley landscape. The National Heritage Area will support enhancement of site interpretation and assist partners in creating a high quality collaborative presentation of the valley’s natural environment that encourages visitors to explore.

**ACTION:** Feature detailed interpretation of the natural landscape and the National Heritage Area’s unique ecosystems at natural resource sites such as the national park, wildlife areas, and wildlife refuges.

Driving Tours and Themed Itineraries
The National Heritage Area and partners will create driving tours and subject-specific itineraries tailored to the interests of nature and recreational enthusiasts. In addition to landscape interpretation along Los Caminos Antiguos, other roads within the valley will be used to create routes linking natural resource sites specifically for use by those interested in the natural landscape. Driving routes through the San Juan Mountains will feature interpretation of the dramatic mountain landscapes and provide access to parking areas and hiking trails on publicly owned lands.

**ACTION:** Create driving tours and subject-specific itineraries in the valley and adjacent mountains tailored to the interests of nature and recreational enthusiasts.

Maps, Trailhead Exhibits, and Trail Guides
The National Heritage Area and partners will develop information and facilities that encourage and support the use of recreational trails by visitors, both within the valley and the adjacent mountains. Information materials should include detailed maps, trailhead exhibits, and trail guides providing information on and interpretation of each of the many publicly accessible trails within the National Heritage Area. These materials should be developed using the National Heritage Area’s graphic identity as a part of the family of interpretive publications. The materials should be developed in a phased manner over time in partnership with the state and federal agencies managing the public lands, beginning with the most readily accessible and interesting sites.

**ACTION:** Create an enhanced recreational and interpretive experience using the many trail systems on publicly owned lands especially in the mountains east and west of the valley.

**ACTION:** Develop interpretive materials to encourage and support the recreational use of public trails including detailed maps, trailhead exhibits, and trail guides.

One of the many directional signs guiding visitors along the route of Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway. Functionally and interpretively speaking, this byway is the “spine” of the National Heritage Area.
Website and Social Media
The National Heritage Area and partners will collaboratively promote recreational opportunities through their websites and through social media. The National Heritage Area website will feature downloadable information, maps, trail guides, and interpretive content for use by residents and visitors. This information will be developed over time as other trail information and initiatives are developed and facilities installed.

ACTION: Use the National Heritage Area website and social media to provide information on recreational opportunities within the heritage area.

Back-Country Guides
The National Heritage Area should explore collaborative relationships with private sector guides and suppliers in promoting trail usage and in creating safe and interesting back country experiences. Through the private sector, identify local guides who can provide services to visitors and groups and lead high quality back-country hiking and camping trips.

ACTION: Collaborate with private sector in providing high quality back country experiences for visitors and groups.

Implementation and Phasing
Implementation of the National Heritage Area initiative is discussed in Chapter 10 of this management plan, A Business Plan for the National Heritage Area. With respect to interpretation, it is important to develop a base level of interpretive presentation and visitor experience upon which additional initiatives can be added over time. Recommendations in this chapter should be closely coordinated with those of Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism and Marketing.

The National Heritage Area board and staff must provide leadership in orchestrating the work of its many partners so that a coordinated presentation is created that is recognizable and satisfying to residents and visitors. Interpretive efforts should begin with heritage area-wide interpretation as discussed in this chapter, providing the framework and setting the context for other future initiatives. Simultaneously, it is important that visitor experience be enhanced within the four Cornerstone Communities to provide a base level of high-quality visitor services which will establish the character and reputation of the National Heritage Area experience. Once a base level of the desired visitor experience is in place, additional interpretive initiatives can be added gradually in accordance with the interests of partners to significantly expand and enhance the heritage area presentation.
INTRODUCTION

Being intentional about not only telling our stories but also how visitors will learn about our heritage and experience it for themselves will help to build the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as a destination that fulfills our goals for multiple benefits.

Building an audience among visitors through interpretation can contribute to the economic revitalization of communities, for as travelers visit this region, they are likely to shop and dine wherever there are nearby opportunities. The kind of tourism to be achieved through the National Heritage Area is what we call heritage tourism.

By recognizing heritage tourism as an economic development strategy, local government and businesses can diversify their approaches to the critical task of improving the local economy. In the process, greater economic stability can lead to greater resources for historic preservation and support community enhancement and revitalization in the National Heritage Area – the start of a virtuous cycle where more and better interpretation supports more and better heritage tourism, which in turn supports more and better community enhancement, and vice versa.

Visitors already travel to the San Luis Valley to experience the Great Sand Dunes National Park, Fort Garland, the two scenic railroads, and Los Antiguos Caminos. A wide variety of events draw visitors, especially to Alamosa, which has cultivated a number of well-attended events in all seasons. Visitors are also passing through Alamosa, often to stay the night because of the large amount of lodging available, to attend such events as the Monte Vista Crane Festival, or to go west to other attractions beyond Wolf Creek Pass (the western entrance to the valley) in Durango and the Four Corners region. Knowledgeable travelers heading south to Taos from La Veta Pass (eastern entrance) swing along the byway south to San Luis instead of the more traveled route to New Mexico through Antonito. They often stop to climb the magnificent Stations of the Cross trail to the top of the mesa overlooking the little town with its splendid views. Hunting and fishing enthusiasts visit in abundance, as well as hikers, climbers, and bikers, frequenting the two national forests. These are audiences to be cultivated and encouraged to enjoy the greater National Heritage Area experience.

This chapter includes recommended actions to enhance heritage tourism and promote the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area through public relations and...
cooperative marketing efforts. The actions outlined below are accompanied by guidance to assist in implementation. It is anticipated that the heritage area will undertake a comprehensive approach to heritage tourism, including an initial focus on tourism development closely tied to and integrated with the implementation of the interpretation recommendations outlined in Chapter 7.

Initial marketing efforts will include outreach to residents and current visitors at heritage area attractions, with visitors at Great Sand Dunes being a key target audience. Marketing efforts will expand to include outreach to travelers passing through the area as well as drive markets with strong potential such as Colorado’s Front Range and Albuquerque.

Over time as the capacity of the heritage area increases and as the visitor experience is enriched and expanded, marketing efforts will extend to targeted domestic and international markets, working in close partnership with key tourism entities within the heritage area and at the state and regional levels. Integrating the development of interpretive elements with the expansion of marketing efforts over time will be critical to ensure that the destination is well worth the drive for visitors to the heritage area.

Tourism marketing is a dynamic process that can necessitate changing strategies to respond to needs and opportunities. The recommendations included in this chapter are more specific for immediate actions and more general for heritage tourism marketing strategies to be implemented during a later phase of development. This has been done intentionally to provide the heritage area with flexibility to respond to the rapidly changing opportunities and challenges of the tourism marketing world, recognizing that both internal and external factors will create opportunities and challenges that the heritage area will be able to take advantage of, or will need to address in order to reach target markets successfully. The guidance and actions outlined in this chapter provide a framework to direct and coordinate the heritage tourism marketing efforts of the heritage area.

**THE PLANNING FOUNDATION FOR HERITAGE TOURISM**

The foundation laid during the management planning process for the National Heritage Area’s development of heritage tourism is complementary to Chapter 7. The critical authorization found in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s enabling legislation (Public Law 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001(c)(2)) is the direction to the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors as managing entity to:
• “Encourage by appropriate means economic viability that is consistent with the Heritage Area”; and
• Assist local partners in “increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources of the heritage area.”

Tourism is also assumed in the legislation’s direction to ensure “that clear, consistent, and appropriate signs identifying points of public access, and sites of interest are posted throughout the Heritage Area.” Finally, achieving recognition for the heritage area (“carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values”) and building audiences for the interpretive programs described in Chapter 7 are vital consequences of a heritage tourism program.

Goals established early in the planning process are ambitious in terms of heritage tourism, with support of “a vibrant heritage tourism sector” viewed as a principal means of accomplishing that “economic viability” stated in the legislation. A host of subgoals include or influence heritage tourism activities (see sidebar).

Conversations with stakeholders during management planning about these goals and the programs to implement them always started with expressions of a deep and abiding pride in the heritage of this National Heritage Area. Participants were confident that if only visitors could experience this place as the residents know and love it, then visitors, too, would be heritage area enthusiasts. They furthermore frequently expressed a longing that this region be understood better by their fellow Coloradans, and encouraged development of a heritage area-wide calendar of events, which they believed would be as useful to residents as to visitors.

Conversations with the Board of Directors to fine-tune ideas discussed with stakeholders emphasized a kind of chicken-and-egg challenge: there is so much more to be revealed of the heritage area’s stories and experiences than is currently available, and there are so many needs in terms of visitor services, is it fair to visitors to encourage them before these needs are met? And yet, a larger audience is clearly necessary, to provide a rewarding exchange with the people for whom businesses and interpretive attractions are built. And there are already great experiences needing only a modest amount of additional information. Conclusion: “Company’s coming” can create ingenuity and urgency among the wide variety of stakeholders responsible for improving the visitor experience, and so the basic strategy is to get more information out immediately about current experiences. Meanwhile, the heritage area will provide leadership and resources to those working to enlarge that experience according to the opportunities identified in this plan. Visitors will find more and more to enjoy as the months and years go by.
**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR HERITAGE TOURISM**

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past.” The National Trust’s Heritage Tourism Program has also developed five guiding principles for successful and sustainable heritage tourism programs, including efforts such as national heritage areas. These five principles provide a framework for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s heritage tourism marketing efforts:

- **Collaborate:** The value of the collective National Heritage Area is greater than the sum of its parts. By working together in partnership toward shared goals that benefit everyone, much more can be accomplished than by working alone.

- **Make Sites and Programs Come Alive:** Heritage travelers are looking for visitor experiences that are exciting and engaging. Successful heritage tourism programs encourage these travelers to stay longer, plan return visits, and encourage others to visit as well.

- **Focus on Authenticity and Quality:** Heritage travelers have higher expectations when they travel, and they are looking for high-quality, authentic experiences.

- **Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism:** A good heritage tourism effort makes the destination a better place to live as well as a better place to visit.

- **Preserve and Protect Resources:** The natural, historic and cultural resources that led to the designation of this region as the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area are irreplaceable treasures. If lost, they can never be replaced. Preservation and conservation need to be a core ethic for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

The National Trust has also developed four steps for getting started, or for taking an existing heritage tourism program to the next level. Developing successful heritage tourism programs is an incremental process, and it is anticipated that the heritage area will repeat these four steps at each stage of development. The four steps for heritage tourism development are:

- **Step One – Assess the Potential:** Evaluate what your community has to offer in attractions, visitor services, organizational capabilities, ability to protect resources, and marketing.

- **Step Two – Plan and Organize:** Make good use of human and financial resources. They are the keys that open the doors to sustainable heritage tourism. Set priorities and measurable goals.

- **Step Three – Prepare for Visitors; Protect and Manage Your Resources:** Look to the future as well as the present. Be sure that the choices you make now improve your community for the long term.

- **Step Four – Market for Success:** Develop a multi-year, many-tiered marketing plan that targets your market. Look for partners in local, regional, state or national groups.

Note that while marketing is a key component of the steps for success, it is important that marketing efforts are preceded by good reflection, planning, and preparation. There is only one opportunity to make a good first impression with a visitor, and so it is important to seek out and develop opportunities to showcase the region in the best light possible. Much of
the richness of the region that adds to the experience of traveling through the heritage area’s landscape is found in the many stories that current and past residents of the heritage area have to tell about the culture and history of the area. By identifying these stories and finding ways to share them through the interpretive recommendations outlined in Chapter 7, the heritage area can work to strengthen and enrich the existing visitor experience.

Strategic Objectives for Heritage Tourism

By embracing the guiding principles and steps outlined above, the heritage area can build a successful and sustainable heritage tourism program for the region. These preservation-based heritage tourism principles and steps fit well with the goals of this entire plan. Development of the heritage tourism and marketing framework and program presented in this chapter is to be guided by these strategic objectives:

- **Develop a single, heritage area-wide graphic identity and messaging campaign** to unite the heritage area’s existing and new attractions and visitor services as a cohesive, comprehensible visitor experience, to be distinct from existing marketing efforts. A key objective for a final graphic identity and messaging strategy is to allow for individual identity while minimizing the potential for visitor confusion. An existing Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area logo provides a springboard for dialogue about a full-fledged identity and brand.

- **Leverage connections to the National Park Service and Great Sand Dunes National Park:** The heritage area’s connection to NPS offers opportunities to build on its credibility and good reputation, and to build a relationship of mutual service.

- **Encourage a welcoming culture of hospitality:** The visitor experience requires conscious cultivation, through hospitality training, visitor centers, and showing the visitors along their way through a variety of media.

- **Fully inform visitors:** This chapter describes the variety of possibilities for informing visitors, especially through printed materials, but also through websites and social media, which have become increasingly important tourism marketing and information tools. The interpretation program in Chapter 7 includes a large heritage area-wide map with visitor information and interpretive content. Good design and quality lend to the credibility and appeal of interpretive and marketing pieces; informational items must be accurate, engaging, and easy to read as well.

- **Reach out to those who can help spread the word** through public relations efforts, a valuable and cost effective approach to marketing. The cost of securing media coverage through public relations is almost always much less than purchasing the same space as a paid ad, and such coverage is more credible with travelers as an unbiased opinion. A local public awareness campaign is a first step, to make residents more aware of the heritage area and encourage existing visitors to stay longer or plan return trips.

- **Support festivals and events** as an important component to represent the heritage area’s living culture, and offer opportunities to provide a richer visitor experience for shorter period of time and showcase communities in the heritage area in the best possible light. The heritage area should work to identify and help alleviate challenges facing festivals and events that could help to support the heritage area experience, and develop targeted strategies to support a robust schedule, with special emphasis on events that help to convey the stories embodied in the interpretive themes for the heritage area.

**TARGET AUDIENCES**

As noted in Chapter 7, the National Heritage Area will strive to engage both residents and visitors. Visitors will be engaged to promote heritage tourism and support community revitalization. Residents will be engaged to reinforce community pride, preserve cultural traditions, and encourage initiatives enhancing local quality of life. Different audiences have different needs and expectations, and as the visitor experience within the heritage area is enhanced over time, the heritage area will expand the marketing reach to audiences farther away from the heritage area.
Initial heritage tourism marketing efforts for the heritage area will target local residents in the six-county San Luis Valley as well as existing visitors at attractions within the heritage area. The objective of these marketing efforts will be to make residents realize that they live in or near a National Heritage Area and to ensure that they have an understanding of what that means. By investing in educating local residents, the heritage area can create “virtual ambassadors” for the heritage area who will be able to tell visiting friends and family about what the heritage area has to offer. Outreach to existing visitors at attractions in the heritage area will reach travelers who have already made a decision to visit this region. Outreach efforts will ensure that they realize that in addition to visiting a specific site, they are also getting a taste of a larger National Heritage Area visitor experience. These existing visitors may decide to stay longer, plan a return trip to visit additional sites, or tell friends and family back home about the opportunity to experience the heritage area. As this audience is already in the heritage area, outreach and marketing efforts will be cost effective.

As a second phase, the heritage area will target travelers passing through the region on their way to another destination and travelers within driving distance (for example, visitors from Colorado’s Front Range or Albuquerque). Monitoring visitation trends including the top cities and states of origin is a useful way to identify the most promising target markets within driving distance. Visitation statistics are tracked by the Colorado Welcome Center and other major attractions such as Cumbres & Toltec and Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (see sidebar).

More attractions within the heritage area should be encouraged to track visitation in a consistent way to provide an even broader snapshot of visitation across the heritage area. The heritage area might consider working with tourism partners to develop a common tracking method or shared indicators that could be collected by sites tracking visitation. Widespread and consistent tracking would provide a more comprehensive picture of the region’s travelers, which in turn will help the heritage area work with tourism partners to implement strategic marketing efforts informed by this customer research. Marketing efforts will include visibility for the heritage area at places that pass-through travelers are likely to stop as they travel through the heritage area.

As discussed more fully in a section below on public relations, efforts to reach target audiences within the drive market could include public relations outreach, coop (cooperative) advertising, and other marketing strategies. The heritage area’s marketing outreach will ultimately expand to include outreach to targeted domestic and international visitors.

**ACTION: Collaborate with tourism partners on visitor research to create a better understanding of existing and potential visitors to the heritage area and to track trends and changes over time.**

**Heritage Area-wide Graphic Identity and Messaging Campaign**

The majority of the marketing efforts undertaken by the heritage area alone, or by the heritage area in partnership with other tourism entities in the region, will be within and across the National Heritage Area. Marketing efforts will be designed to establish an awareness of the heritage area, create a greater appreciation for the heritage area’s intrinsic resources, and encourage visitation and longer stays at sites and in communities that are part of the heritage area. The creation of a heritage area-wide graphic identity and messaging campaign will be a key component to link existing and new attractions and visitor services within the heritage area into a cohesive visitor experience.

The heritage area’s efforts to create a shared identity for the region will be distinctly different from marketing efforts undertaken by regional tourism entities such as the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau or the San Luis Valley Tourism Association. The heritage area is not simply marketing tourism attractions within the region. Rather, the heritage area is striving to create a cohesive, comprehensive, and unified experience for visitors. From the first exposure to marketing materials to the actual experience of traveling through the region, the Board of Directors will seek to create a consistent image and message along with high-quality visitor experiences that are clearly part of a larger heritage area-wide visitor experience.

Building from the existing Sangre de Cristo logo, the heritage area has created versions of the logo that will work at all scales, and in color as well as in black and white. These
graphic image options offer a range to complement the image in the current logo, and can be used in applications that might require something more simple or stylized. Consistent use of the approved graphic image across all print, online, and built infrastructure for the heritage area will help to unify perceptions of the National Heritage Area’s activities. If funds are not available to change the logo to a new version in all places where it appears within the heritage area, the unifying power of the shared graphic identity will be weakened. In brief, it will be costly and disruptive to the efforts to build the brand to change the graphic identity mid-stream, so it is important to get the brand right the first time.

Another key component will be the development of a messaging strategy to accompany the graphic identity. While the name “Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area” can be incorporated as part of the graphic identity, the messaging strategy will take this one step further to help the heritage area respond to the question “What is the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area?” While the response to this question may vary in different settings and for different audiences, it is important that the heritage area’s stakeholders, starting with the board, convey a consistent message about what the heritage area is all about. The challenge is that the heritage area will do many different things, and the heritage area’s stakeholders may have gotten involved with the heritage area for different reasons and may have different priorities that they feel most strongly about. While this diversity ultimately makes the heritage area stronger, it also poses the risk that members of the community or visitors who ask what the heritage area is could well receive very different responses from different individuals.

As an additional challenge, the three counties that are part of the heritage area and the San Luis Valley as a whole already have a number of existing brands such as Los Caminos Antiguos, various organizations within the San Luis Valley, Alamosa County, Costilla County, Conejos County, and Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (just to name a few). A key objective for designing a final graphic identity and messaging strategy would be to allow for individual identity while minimizing the potential for visitor confusion.

The close relationship between the heritage area and Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway means that it is especially important that the graphic identity for both the heritage area and byway clearly indicate the relationship between the two. Messaging strategies for the byway can also help to reinforce this relationship – for example, encouraging the use of a tagline with Los Caminos Antiguos to identify the byway as the primary travel route for visitors through the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. The current arrangement to have Los Caminos Antiguos exist within the heritage area’s organizational structure with a separate board should allow for good coordination between the scenic byway and the heritage area.

Another factor to consider in developing the approved graphic identity for the heritage area is the extent to which the heritage area would like (and is allowed to) emphasize the connection between the National Heritage Area and the National Park Service. The following section outlines considerations related to this issue.

Whether it is a tag line that accompanies the graphic image, an elevator speech to briefly summarize what the heritage area is all about, or a brief script for responding to visitor inquiries, developing an approved messaging strategy will help the heritage area’s diverse stakeholders present a unified image. The graphic identity and messaging should be incorporated into the Sangre de Cristo website, signage, published materials, interpretive exhibits, and other visual forms of communication so they all have the same graphic identity and convey the same message.

To build on the brand and messaging strategy, the heritage area could develop a Style Guide to provide direction about who is allowed to use the graphic identity and how it is to be used. If multiple versions of the approved graphic identity are developed, the guide would provide direction about which version is most appropriate for different uses. The Style Guide would provide guidelines about the overall graphic look of National Heritage Area products such as exhibits, signage, banners, print and online materials, and any other places where the National Heritage Area’s logo might appear. The graphic identity can serve as a seal of approval – an indication of quality and an authentic experience for visitors traveling...
through the region. However, the credibility of the graphic image will only be as strong as the weakest link. Thus if the graphic identity is used by an attraction or a visitor service that does not measure up to the standards or goals set by the heritage area, there is a greater risk that the graphic image will not convey a sense of quality to potential visitors.

Chapter 7 outlines the heritage area’s interpretive themes as well as several different level of community designation (Cornerstone Communities, Valley Communities, and Heritage Communities). It will be important to ensure that the communities that meet the standards for each designation are represented accurately through the graphic image and other messaging to residents and to the traveling public. Once the graphic identity, messaging strategy, and Style Guide are in place, the heritage area will oversee the appropriate use of the graphic identity and messaging throughout the region. This oversight will ensure the consistent and correct use of the graphic identity and ensure compliance with the direction set out in the Style Guide.

**ACTION:** Develop a single graphic identity and messaging plan for the National Heritage Area.

**ACTION:** Develop a Graphic Identity and Messaging Strategy Style Guide to ensure consistent and correct use of the graphic identity and messaging strategy across the National Heritage Area.

**ACTION:** Monitor the use of the graphic identity and messaging to ensure compliance with the Style Guide.

**LEVERAGE CONNECTIONS TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE**

Federal appropriations for National Heritage Areas are awarded through the National Park Service (NPS), which has several staff dedicated to heritage areas in Washington, DC. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has had a close working relationship with the NPS Heritage Partnerships Program in Lakewood, Colorado (“Denver office”) as well as with the staff at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. While the legislation to create the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area was an individual act of Congress, the feasibility study and this management plan were completed by working closely with NPS. The Denver office has made NPS staff from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) available to assist in heritage area development activities. While not all heritage areas include a national park, Sangre de Cristo is fortunate to have Great Sand Dunes. The heritage area’s connection to NPS offers opportunities to build on its credibility and good reputation.

**Passport**

There are a number of ways that the heritage area may be able to leverage its NPS association and national designation. Many other National Heritage Areas have developed a heritage area stamp for the service’s well-known Passport program. The Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve already has a stamp for Great Sand Dunes available in the visitor center gift shop, and adding a second passport stamp at this location for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area would help visitors to the National Park realize that they are also within a National Heritage Area. The passport stamp should reflect the graphic identity developed by the heritage area as one additional opportunity to reinforce the heritage area brand. The passport stamp could also be made available at other locations in the heritage area such as the Colorado Welcome Center, the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, or Fort Garland. In addition to making the passport stamp available at key locations throughout the heritage area, the heritage area should work with NPS to explore opportunities to add a description of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to the Passport booklet.

While there would be little cost associated with the passport stamp for the heritage area, it would be important to monitor passport stamp locations to ensure that they are providing prominent visibility for the Sangre de Cristo passport stamp. As appropriate, additional locations for passport stamps could be identified. As benefits for communities participating in the heritage area community programs are identified, being identified as a location for passport stamps (as well as a place to pick up Junior Ranger booklets, get a tear-off map about the heritage area, and have a heritage area brochure rack) might be potential benefits to consider.
ACTION: Develop a Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area passport stamp. Encourage active participation in the National Park Service’s Passport program at multiple sites within the heritage area.

Junior Ranger Program

Most National Parks and many National Heritage Areas offer a Junior Ranger program to engage younger visitors. Some programs include two versions of the Junior Ranger booklet to target younger and older children, while others use a single booklet but might require older children to complete additional sections or provide additional information in their responses. The Junior Ranger booklets are made available to children free upon request, and if the child successfully completes the activities in the booklet he or she can return to any visitor center in the park to be sworn in as an official Junior Ranger. In most cases, the new Junior Ranger is awarded a Junior Ranger badge or patch to commemorate their achievement. Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is one of the many National Parks offering a Junior Ranger program.

The heritage area could prepare a Sangre de Cristo Junior Ranger program that could be offered to children at Great Sand Dunes alongside the current Great Sand Dunes Junior Ranger program. The availability of this additional Junior Ranger program would be yet another opportunity to remind visitors at Great Sand Dunes that they are also in a National Heritage Area. The Sangre de Cristo Junior Ranger Program could also be offered at additional locations throughout the heritage area, perhaps corresponding with locations for the Sangre de Cristo passport stamp. Having multiple locations to pick up and return the completed booklets is critical to the success of the program, especially as some travelers may pass through the region and may not return to the location where the Junior Ranger booklet was picked up before leaving the heritage area.

Junior Ranger booklets could be a relatively easy way to create initial curriculum materials for use in local schools, and could potentially be incorporated as part of a larger school curriculum about the heritage area. For example, the initial printing of Junior Ranger booklets might factor in a supply of booklets to be provided to every fourth grade class in the San Luis Valley to teach students about the history of their own community. To encourage local students to complete the Junior Ranger workbooks, consider incentives such as providing a badge or premium for the successful completion of the booklet, or entering students who complete the book into a drawing for such prizes as a family trip on the Cumbres & Toltec, dinner at a local restaurant, an opportunity to meet a prominent elected official, or other heritage area experiences. Booklets could also be offered to youth groups such as 4-H, Boy Scouts, or Girl Scouts as part of meeting a badge requirement or a community service program. Additional information about creating a school curriculum connected to the heritage area is included in Chapter 6, Conserving Culture & Traditions.

In addition to working with schools in the San Luis Valley, there may be opportunities to use the Sangre de Cristo Junior Ranger workbook with youth organizations such as 4-H, Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts. For example, there may be opportunities to connect the workbook to the completion of badge requirements or as part of a community service effort. Activities from the Junior Ranger workbook could be modified and included in local newspapers as part of a section targeting local youth. A school group or youth organization might create their own version of an activity booklet based on the region’s heritage, using the official Junior Ranger workbook as a model. Whether youth are formally completing the Junior Ranger requirements, or whether the materials are adapted for other uses as part of a community outreach strategy, a Junior Ranger program could provide a number of opportunities for engagement.

ACTION: Develop a Sangre de Cristo Junior Ranger workbook. Offer ongoing opportunities for local youth to participate in a Junior Ranger Program for the heritage area.

Sangre de Cristo Visitor Guide

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is currently the most visited attraction within the heritage area, drawing an estimated 270,000 visitors annually to the region. By comparison, the Colorado Welcome Center and the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad each attract an estimated 37-38,000 visitors annually. As Great Sand Dunes currently attracts seven time the number of visitors as the next most...
visited attractions in the heritage area, finding effective ways to encourage visitors to Great Sand Dunes to stay longer and spend time exploring other parts of the heritage area is a key marketing strategy.

Visitors arriving at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve are greeted at the gate by a ranger and provided with a copy of the Great Sand Dunes Visitor Guide, which is generally produced once a year. This newsletter, which is similar to the format distributed at many other National Parks across America, includes useful information to help travelers make the most of their visit to Great Sand Dunes. As the heritage area is not a gated attraction like the National Park, there is no corresponding entrance for the heritage area. However, as Great Sand Dunes is also part of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, there may be opportunities to welcome visitors to both the National Park and the heritage area at the entrance to Great Sand Dunes.

While Great Sand Dunes is well known and is likely to be a primary destination for many travelers arriving at the ranger station, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a newer designation that is likely not well known by many of the Great Sand Dunes visitors. The heritage area could produce a companion seasonal Visitor Guide modeled on the format of the Great Sand Dunes Visitor Guide that would be published once a year. Rangers could verbally welcome travelers to both the National Park and heritage area, and could provide information about both to all travelers entering Great Sand Dunes. Providing every car with a copy of both newsletters would allow the rangers to respond to the anticipated question that is likely to follow a welcome to both entities, specifically “what is the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area?”

In addition to producing a sufficient supply for distribution at the Great Sand Dunes ranger station, a supply could be made available at key distribution locations throughout the National Heritage Area. When the guide is released in the spring, the heritage area could work with local newspapers on printing and could also consider opportunities to have it included as an insert in local papers or distributed to schools as part of community outreach.

The richness of the heritage area’s stories can come alive for travelers through the knowledge and different perspectives of heritage area residents. In addition to an introduction and welcome, the Visitor Guide could include articles or stories on the “voices of the valley” based on oral histories. Stories would illustrate the heritage area’s interpretive themes, each ending with information about specific locations or driving tours where visitors could learn more or have a meaningful visitor experience connected to that story. The guide could include parallel components to the Great Sand Dunes Visitor Guide such as a driving map, a calendar of events, travel tips, and a section on planning a visit. The guide should complement, not compete with or duplicate other visitor guides already developed for the region such as the Alamosa Visitors Guide. The heritage area’s guide should look distinctly different and should provide a different kind of information to avoid duplicating efforts. The guide should be developed in close coordination with NPS staff at Great Sand Dunes to ensure that the content complies with NPS standards.

**ACTION:** Develop and disseminate a Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Visitor Guide for the heritage area on an annual basis.
ENCOURAGE A WELCOMING CULTURE THROUGH HOSPITALITY TRAINING

Different attractions throughout the heritage area and the San Luis Valley offer various kinds of hospitality training programs, including the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC), the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau, and others. Colorado also offers several programs at the state level, including the Grassroots Training Program that was specifically developed for Colorado’s Scenic & Historic Byways Program. The Grassroots Training Program includes the Byway Road Trip board game (see sidebar). Providing hospitality training materials in a game format gives frontline employees and volunteers an enjoyable way to learn while they plan on their own, reinforcing the messages provided during the hospitality training workshops.

It is possible to commission custom versions of this board game that would include cards with questions specific to one byway, such as Los Caminos Antiguos. If desired, this program could also be adapted for the heritage area. During the planning process, volunteers from the Colorado Welcome Center indicated that many of their visitors are unaware of the history of the valley and may have misperceptions about the region. For example, visitors assume that the valley is very cold in the winter, or may have misperceptions that they would not be able to eat in local restaurants unless they speak Spanish. The insightful observations of these volunteers and other veteran visitor center volunteers within the region would provide a wonderful resource to help compile commonly asked questions and answers for customized cards for the heritage area to create a customized version of the Byway Road Trip for the heritage area.

The heritage area should build on existing training programs and materials to encourage more consistent hospitality training region-wide, offering training workshops on a regular basis. To encourage active participation, consider making completion of the hospitality training program a prerequisite for sites and communities that are recognized as part of the heritage area. For example, the heritage area may ask communities seeking designation as a Cornerstone, Valley or Heritage Community to demonstrate that a certain number of individuals involved in providing hospitality have successfully completed training, are keeping their skills up to date, and are sharing their knowledge with other residents.

All successful training programs need to be evaluated and adapted in response to evaluations over time. At a minimum, hospitality training programs should be offered once a year, generally just before the start of the tourist season. In many locations where there may be greater turnover of frontline staff it may be necessary to offer hospitality training programs more frequently. Offering incentives for participation, rewards, and recognition for outstanding visitor service, and offering on-site training in different locations or communities are other ways to ensure maximum participation in hospitality training programs.

Offering refresher courses will be an important component to keep existing welcome center volunteer fresh and current. Refresher courses should also be offered annually just before the tourism season begins, and will offer an opportunity for participants to share what’s new as well as offer opportunities for networking and building enthusiasm among other volunteers and staff across the entire heritage area.

ACTION: Create a heritage area-wide hospitality training program for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

ACTION: Continue to offer heritage-area hospitality training and refresher courses on an ongoing basis.

FULLY INFORM VISITORS

Designate Heritage Area Welcome Centers in Key Locations

In addition to the official state Colorado Welcome Center in Alamosa, San Luis and Fort Garland already have small welcome centers. In San Luis, the visitor center is currently housed in a downtown storefront on the main street through town. In Fort Garland, the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee opened the Entrada Visitor Center in 2004. Open seven days a week from Memorial Day to Labor Day, it is currently staffed by volunteers and paid staff from Seniors, Inc.

In addition to these existing welcome centers, development efforts to create a Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center in the San Luis Cultural Center are underway. In Conejos County, local
Stakeholders have been exploring opportunities to create a Gateway Heritage Center, plus potential uses identified for the now vacant historic Antonito Depot have included a visitor center component. As efforts to establish additional welcome or visitor centers in communities throughout the heritage area evolve, offering heritage area-wide hospitality training will ensure both quality and consistency in the information that is provided to travelers. As noted earlier, locations that serve as official welcome centers for the heritage area could be key locations to get a heritage area passport stamp, pick up or redeem a Junior Ranger book, browse through the heritage area brochure rack, or get directions from knowledgeable staff or volunteers, perhaps including a suggested itinerary outlined on a heritage area map. The designation of heritage area welcome centers should be closely connected to the community designation program outlined in Chapter 7.

**ACTION:** Designate heritage area welcome centers.

**Entrance and Wayfinding Signage**

Entrance signage at major gateways can alert travelers that they have entered the heritage area. While a personal welcome by a trained volunteer or staff person at an official welcome or visitor center is an ideal way to welcome visitors, another way to build awareness of the heritage area and its boundaries would be to develop and install entrance signage along every major roadway leading into the heritage area. The entrance signs should reflect the graphic identity for the heritage area and should be part of an integrated system of signage for wayfinding and interpretation.

Additional wayfinding signage within the heritage area can reinforce its identity and assist with navigational needs. Wayfinding signage is further discussed in Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation. Maps and online navigation tools can also identify the heritage area and provide additional assistance for visitors to find their way within the region.

**ACTION:** Install entrance signs at major gateways to the heritage area.

**GPS Navigation Systems**

With growing interest and availability of GPS car navigation systems, as well as GPS navigation systems built into smart phones, more travelers are using technology to provide directional assistance while traveling. Working with tourism partners, the heritage area could help to ensure that key visitor attractions as well as restaurants, hotels, and other visitor services are included as listed destinations to ensure that the heritage area does not lose its share of GPS driven traffic. While listing a destination is a relatively simple process that can be as simple as getting a D-U-N-S number (a unique nine digit identification number assigned to businesses that register with Dun and Bradstreet), it may be more effective to designate a few key individuals to collect and enter this information for the region to ensure consistent and comprehensive coverage. There may be other places such as InfoUSA where it would be useful to make sure that attractions and businesses are listed.

**ACTION:** Work to ensure that attractions and visitor services in the heritage area are registered as listed destinations on GPS navigation systems.

**Maps and Other Printed Wayfinding Materials**

Maps and other printed materials can also provide wayfinding. For example, the heritage area might produce a tear-off map (an 11” x 17” ledger size black-and-white map on a gummed pad) to be kept at hotel registration desks, at the sales counter in retail outlets and gas stations, the ticket counter of gated attractions, and in other prominent locations. A simple, inexpensive tear-off map showing the entire heritage area on one side and enlargements of different heritage area communities on the other side with a high quality design that incorporated the graphic identity of the heritage area would be a valuable wayfinding tool that would also create awareness and visibility for the heritage area. Chapter 7 discusses production of a more detailed interpretive map for the heritage area as a separate action.
ACTION: Produce a tear-off map for the heritage area.

Print and Online Marketing Materials

Print and online marketing materials will be an important component of promotional efforts for the heritage area, offering opportunities to reinforce the graphic identity and messaging for the heritage area and provide valuable information to both encourage visitors to come to the region and enrich their experience while in the region.

Print Materials

In addition to the printed materials discussed earlier in this chapter such as the Visitor Guide and the Junior Ranger booklet, the family of printed publications discussed in Chapter 7 will help to reinforce the graphic identity and messaging strategies for the byway. This could include a large heritage area-wide map with visitor information and interpretive content that folds into a brochure format as a more extensive version of the overview driving map included in the Visitor Guide, brochures for individual communities, special itineraries, topics of interest or sites. The concept behind the family of print publications would be to allow for individual identity and information, but to provide the information in a consistent format to reinforce to the visitor that all of the sites, stories and communities are part of the same overall visitor experience. One way to accomplish this would be to create a brochure template for different kinds of brochures, and then to offer cost sharing with the heritage area for participating attractions or communities that choose to develop their community brochure or itinerary using the heritage area’s template. Willingness to present information about a community or a site using the heritage area’s template could also be a requirement for inclusion as a Cornerstone, Valley or Heritage Community program. By including an appropriate mix of standard and customized elements in each template, attractions will have ample opportunity to express their individuality and share their unique stories while at the same time proudly proclaiming their inclusion as part of the heritage area.

The availability of a standard template would not prohibit anyone in the heritage area from creating brochures or any other printed materials using their own designs, but any brochures supported financially by the heritage area would follow this format. The use of a standard template designed by a professional graphic designer could offer a way for sites and communities to have a much more professional looking printed piece without incurring the design cost. As an additional quality control measure, the heritage area would designate qualified reviewers to sign off on copy for brochures using the standard template to ensure accuracy.

Once materials are printed, it is vital that the heritage area have a distribution and dissemination plan in place to ensure that the heritage area’s printed materials reach their target audience. Printed materials may fall into one of two general categories: “lure” pieces designed to convince travelers to pick the heritage area as their travel destination, and “information” pieces designed to help travelers who have already made the decision to come to the heritage area find their way and know more about the place they are visiting. Distribution points for “lure” or marketing pieces should be locations where visitors come to plan a future trip, or to get more visitor information for a trip they are currently taking. This might include a few key points of entry in the heritage area as well as locations in target markets outside the heritage area. Printed information or interpretive pieces would be

![Auto tour directional signage at the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.](image-url)
available almost exclusively at designated locations within the heritage area such as welcome and visitor centers.

As marketing pieces are designed for travelers who have not yet made a decision about whether they want to come to the heritage area (or stay longer in the San Luis Valley in order to more fully experience the heritage area), marketing materials should include glossy photos that show off the region to its best advantage, and brief but engaging copy that helps travelers envision the activities that their heritage area experience might include. Studies of heritage travelers indicates that they are also very interested in shopping and dining, and thus a lure piece should ideally have images showing local food and unique shopping opportunities, not just museums and other visitor attractions. Rather than including extensive detail, marketing materials should include a link or toll free number to call for additional information about trip planning.

“Informational” or interpretive printed materials would include maps, driving or walking tours, itineraries, or brochures that share more detailed stories about communities, individual attractions, or specific topics of interest. While good design and quality can lend to the credibility and appeal of these interpretive pieces, because these are designed primarily as informational pieces it is more important to make sure that the information is accurate, engaging, and easy to read rather than providing the pieces in an expensive glossy, four-color format.

Ideally, the heritage area will assemble an extensive collection of informational materials over time. One possible way to make information materials available throughout the heritage area and to emphasize that these brochures represent experiences that are all part of a larger collective visitor experience would be to develop a small custom brochure rack designed specifically for heritage area information. This brochure rack should be designed to reflect the graphic identity and messaging for the heritage area, and the size and design (for example, wall mounted versus free-standing) should be determined to ensure that the brochure rack is easy to display in a prominent location in each site. Locations for heritage area brochure racks should be included across the heritage area, with at least one location in each county and possibly one location in every participating community. Criteria for eligibility for a heritage area brochure rack could be include as a part of the benefits package for participating Cornerstone, Valley and Heritage communities. To provide maximum visibility for marketing and informational materials, printed publications should also be made available as downloadable pdf documents on the heritage area’s website.

**ACTION:** Create brochure design templates for communities, individual attractions, itineraries, and topics of interest related to the heritage area’s interpretive themes that reflect the graphic identity and messaging strategy for the heritage area.

**ACTION:** Collaborate with communities and individual attractions to develop brochures using the established heritage area brochure design templates.

**ACTION:** Implement distribution and dissemination strategies for the heritage area’s print publications in key locations.

**Online Materials**

Websites and social media have become increasingly important tourism marketing tools. Technology also offers opportunities for cost savings in printing and postage, as well as immediate access to worldwide audiences. The heritage area has developed a website at www.sdchna.org, and there is also information about the heritage area on the National Park Service’s website, both in the Great Sand Dunes section and as a part of the American Latino Heritage itinerary. The www.sdchna.org website is primarily directed towards visitors. As the heritage area’s work expands, it may be desirable to create distinct sections of the website for internal and external audiences. Internal audiences would be local partners, stakeholders, volunteers, board members and staff for the heritage area, while external audiences would be travelers interested in experiencing the heritage area.

It is also possible that the heritage area might want to develop dedicated sections of the website for other kinds of
specialized users such as teachers or group tour planners. If the website is expanded to address the interests of multiple audiences, the home page should clearly direct different audiences to different sections of the website. It is especially important that the portal for travelers be prominent and user friendly, as this audience is most likely to be experiencing the website for the first time. The portal to additional information for heritage area partners can be more subtle, perhaps at the bottom of the page, as it is for access to a section of the website that is more likely to be used by repeat visitors to the website who know how to find what they are looking for.

While websites are a cost effective way to reach audiences, it is important to continually refresh the site with new information and updates to keep the content current and engaging. Including downloadable printed materials makes information available immediately to the web visitor and extends limited print budgets. Websites offer the ability to make instantaneous updates or changes, which printed publications do not. At the same time, if users experience outdated or incorrect information on a website, visitors are more likely to move on and discount that site as a useful source of information.

Keep in mind that potential travelers surfing the web may have little knowledge of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, or the San Luis Valley, or perhaps even Colorado. Providing maps, graphics, or other information that place the heritage area into a larger geographic context can be helpful for travelers who may not realize exactly where the heritage area is and how long it would take them to travel to the heritage area from other destinations. Maps are important, but keep in mind that many travelers may not have a sense of the scale of the region or the travel time between destinations within the region. Suggested itineraries can be a useful tool to help first-time travelers understand what might be realistic to do in a few hours, a half day, a one-day or a two-day trip to the heritage area.

The Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) maintains a “Colorado Heritage Database” that currently includes detailed information about 29 sites in the three-county heritage area as well as information about the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge. The CTO can make this information available to the heritage area without any charge. Linking to this online database may provide opportunities to link the heritage area to other heritage tourism experiences statewide.

Working with an experienced webmaster can provide opportunities to maximize exposure by identifying top search terms and optimizing opportunities to rank highly in online searches. Tracking the use of the website using an analysis tool such as Google Analytics is a good way to track such indicators as number of unique visitors, traffic sources and keywords used, average length of visit, top referring sites, number of page views, and a host of other tools.

As the heritage area comprises a number of existing attractions and communities that may have their own websites or web presence, consider opportunities to link to other websites and for other websites to link to the heritage area’s website. For example, including a prominent link to the heritage area’s website through an icon that reflects the approved graphic identity for the heritage area might be another requirement for participating attractions or communities. Guidelines for web links should be included as part of the style guide developed in conjunction with the graphic identity.

**ACTION:** Enhance and maintain a user-friendly website for the heritage area that includes accurate and current information for visitors and heritage area partners.
Social media offers an interactive opportunity to connect with potential travelers. While social media users currently tend to skew younger than heritage travelers in general, the use of social media is quickly gaining a growing foothold across all demographics. Some tourism entities in the region including the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau have already established a social media presence, and thus should be key partners in developing a social media presence for the heritage area.

ACTION: Create a social media presence for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. Monitor the return on investment with different kinds of social media and continue to monitor the latest trends in this field.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND TARGETED MARKETING

Public Awareness Campaign
To maximize the heritage area’s public relations opportunities, start by developing a public awareness campaign to make local residents more aware of the heritage area and encourage existing visitors at attractions within the heritage area to stay longer or plan return trips to experience more of what the heritage area has to offer. This could include community outreach with the staff or board members seeking out speaking engagements with local civic groups such as the Rotary Club or Kiwanis as well as looking for opportunities to have a booth or table at events to create a visible presence for the heritage area. Showcasing the heritage area in local newspapers and on local radio stations such as KRZA and KGIW provides an opportunity to share newsworthy developments for the heritage area. There may also be opportunities to seek out regular newspaper or radio features devoted to the heritage area.

ACTION: Develop a public awareness campaign.

Press Outreach
Developing a press kit that includes templates for news releases, a standard news release with boilerplate information about the heritage area, a digital image library and a media contact list will ensure that the heritage area is prepared to respond to last minute press opportunities. News releases should be sent out on a regular basis to keep the heritage area in the public eye, and the heritage area staff should work to cultivate good relationships with key local media contacts.

ACTION: Develop a Sangre de Cristo press kit.
**Other Public Relations**

Public relations efforts are a valuable and cost-effective marketing tool. Public relations efforts could include working to create greater visibility for the heritage area in Colorado’s statewide tourism marketing efforts. For example, the heritage area could seek out opportunities for visibility in the state visitor guide and the state tourism website (Colorado.com), or work to have the heritage area included in the state highway map. As another example, the heritage area could collaborate with key tourism partners to host a red carpet familiarization or “fam” tour for travel writers to enable them to experience the heritage area first hand.

Good public relations efforts offer the opportunity for feature coverage about the heritage area in targeted publications. The cost of securing media coverage through public relations is almost always much less than purchasing the same space as a paid ad, and a travel feature story is likely to have more credibility with travelers as an unbiased opinion than a paid advertisement. On the flip side, placing stories through public relations efforts means that the heritage area will not have control over the content in the story, the timing of the story’s release, where the story appears, or even if the story runs at all.

**Targeted Marketing**

As the capacity of the heritage area grows, public relations efforts will expand to include outreach to travelers passing through on their way to other destinations, and ultimately will expand to include targeted audiences in drive markets such as the Front Range and Albuquerque. Efforts could include collaborating with partners to disseminate special offers to encourage longer stays or to plan a stop on a return trip. Special offers could be made available at locations where pass-through travelers are likely to stop such as welcome centers, hotels, restaurants and gas stations. To reach targeted drive markets, the heritage area could collaborate with tourism partners to place coop advertising in publications most likely to reach key target audiences. The tear-off maps for the heritage areas described earlier in this chapter would be another effective way to create visibility for the heritage area, particularly if the maps are displayed in hotel lobbies, at the cash register at gas stations and in other locations where pass-through travelers are likely to stop. There may also be opportunities to send press kits to media contacts in key target audiences in specific target drive markets.

The heritage area’s marketing outreach will ultimately expand to include outreach to targeted domestic and international visitors, especially those that are most likely to have an interest in the visitor experiences developed by the heritage area. For example, the Sacred Circle tour in Costilla County together with many other historic churches in the heritage area might be of interest to religious groups in specific target markets. A range of external factors will affect which domestic and international audiences will actually have the greatest potential at the time when the heritage area is ready to pursue a broader marketing strategy. External factors such as fluctuations in gas prices and weather impact the drive market and changes in the international economy - the exchange rate for the US dollar, visa and international travel restrictions - and a host of other factors can impact the appeal of the Sangre de Cristo for international audiences. It is premature to predict exactly which domestic and international target markets will provide the strongest return on investment when the heritage area is ready for expansion.
**Tour Packages**

The heritage area should work with key partners to create tour packages that showcase the best of the heritage area. Tour packages can be promoted through the heritage area’s website, the Visitor Guide, or through other media and public relations efforts. Tour packages could include group tour opportunities that are already available such as the Sacred Circle Tour, packages that might combine a stay at the Steam Train Hotel or the Indiana Jones Bed & Breakfast with a scenic railroad experience, or other new tour package developed to showcase the heritage area’s interpretive themes. Tour packages could include both day trips as well as overnight packages.

**ACTION:** Create and market tour package for the heritage area.

**Festivals and Events**

As noted in Chapter 7, festivals and events are an important component to represent the heritage area’s living culture. A calendar of events should be maintained and promoted by the heritage area. Festivals and events offer opportunities to provide richer visitor experiences for shorter periods of time, such as a weekend, which offers an opportunity to showcase communities in the heritage area in the best possible light. While an annual event may not generate sufficient year round visitation to justify additional hotels, restaurants or retail businesses, a full calendar of events happening region-wide can help to make this happen.

While events can be an effective strategy to showcase a community or site, festivals and events can also be time-consuming for volunteers and staff. One of Costilla County’s largest annual events has a long and proud history, but challenges of finding volunteers for the event has meant that in some years it has been organized at the last minute. While this may not impact local visitation, travelers coming from a distance need additional planning time. Perhaps even more critical, advance planning and predictability will be essential for tourism listings in travel publications. Costilla County stakeholders also mentioned festivals such as the Harvest Festival and Oktoberfest that used to be offered, but were dropped due to volunteer burnout. Stakeholders also mentioned new event ideas that they would like to see developed, and events such as the studiotours that they would like to be expanded to encompass a larger area. Finally, with the interest in religious heritage, stakeholders mentioned the Pastores and Posadas at Christmastime and Lent and Holy Week as additional possible event opportunities, especially for travelers with an interest in religious heritage.

Having a better understanding of the issues and opportunities facing current and potential festivals and events in all three counties (including the challenge of volunteer capacity) will
help the heritage area develop targeted strategies to support a robust calendar of festivals and events for the region. For example, this could include providing or identifying sources of grant support for events, or seeking out opportunities to dedicate part or all of a staff position to event coordination to supplement volunteer efforts. While this might be an additional staff person working for the heritage area, it could also be a new position in another organization, or redefining an existing job description for a position in another organization.

The heritage area should work to identify and help alleviate challenges facing festivals and events that could help to support the heritage area experience. The heritage area should ensure that events complement, rather than compete with other events in the region. The heritage area should emphasize supporting and promoting events that help to convey the stories embodied in the interpretive themes for the heritage area. For example, the heritage area could help to develop a “Sabor de Sangre de Cristo” (Taste of Sangre de Cristo) event that would feature local foods and food products, working with food producers and restaurants. The heritage area could consider developing criteria for official Sangre de Cristo events and provide guidelines about how these events can use the Sangre de Cristo graphic identity as outlined in the Style Guide. Where possible, the heritage area should have a visible presence at these official events.

**ACTION:** Promote and support festivals and events in the heritage area, especially those with the potential to draw heritage travelers and provide a meaningful experience connected to the interpretive themes of the heritage area.

**MEASURING SUCCESS**

By tracking the results of individual heritage tourism marketing efforts as well as tracking visitation trends and other tourism trends, the heritage area will be able to evaluate and analyze the impacts of its efforts. While it can be challenging to make the time to collect results and other
statistics to help evaluate the success of the heritage area’s efforts, this essential final step will help the heritage area fine tune efforts and ensure that future efforts maximize the potential for a return on investment. Chapter 10 discusses overall evaluation strategies for the heritage area as a whole, including ways to evaluate the success of the heritage tourism marketing efforts outlined in this chapter.

Implementation and phasing of the actions outlined above are also discussed in Chapter 10. The heritage area and partners should implement a phased plan to develop a base level of coordinated heritage tourism marketing efforts over a three-year period. Beginning with residents and existing visitors, marketing efforts should seek to broaden the heritage area’s audience over time. Once a base level experience is in place, additional promotion can be added gradually to significantly expand and enhance that audience.
Chapter 9 • Community Revitalization

The beautifully maintained 1907 Frank Building built during Alamosa’s boom years at 602 Main Street once served as a men’s clothing and shoe store and later a drugstore. Today it houses the Narrow Gauge Newsstand, a good business for a structure too small for today’s versions of its historic uses. “Main Streets” across the nation have adapted to the realities of modern commerce while saving their old buildings and learning to serve new markets, including the traveling public.

Introduction

This chapter describes strategies and actions to be pursued by the heritage area, by governmental and nonprofit partners, and by business owners and investors to influence community vitality. Revitalizing communities is a goal of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, expected to result from a focus on heritage tourism, interpretation, and historic preservation. Historic preservation is also a goal, one that requires a focus on community economic vitality – for historic communities and buildings must be viable in a modern economy in order to survive for the long term.

In pursuing the benefits of the National Heritage Area, it is possible to take actions that offer multiple benefits that include positive effects on the region’s communities and their economic vitality. Community revitalization can stem from successes in heritage tourism, interpretation, celebration of cultural heritage, protection of natural resources, and historic preservation – activities described in preceding chapters. If communities are alert to opportunities thus presented, they can seek a new level of prosperity.

“Community” today means different things to different people; the Internet, in particular, now gathers like-minded people in “communities of interest.” Here in the San Luis Valley, we mean the physical places where people live near one another. With neighbors and those who live close by, we gather in towns and smaller places for social, employment, commercial, governmental, religious, and recreational reasons. We also mean “community” in the sense of social connection we receive from being rooted as families and individuals in those places and pursuing those activities. Without necessarily speaking of it, because we share these places and these activities, we share an identity – we understand things about ourselves in common.

The physical community supports the social community. Each place evolves in response to individual and collective decisions that have social implications – to build anew or restore the old, to invest or not to invest sends signals to others about the health and prosperity of a place. Spending time working with others to solve problems the entire community faces is a social decision. The act of preserving family or religious legacies – traditions, stories, papers, images, objects, buildings – spills over into the public realm as those acts become known more widely among
Economic Conditions of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has a population of approximately 27,225 people, and has grown less than 1 percent over the past decade. Much of the population growth over that time has occurred within Alamosa’s city limits; the rest has occurred primarily in unincorporated areas. The heritage area, which comprises more than 3,245 square miles, is predominantly rural, with Alamosa and Alamosa East serving as home to more than 37 percent of the population. Another 21 percent of residents of the heritage area lives in small communities of fewer than 1,000 people. With a few exceptions, these small communities are declining in population. The average population density of the heritage area is 8 people per square mile, but factoring density in the City of Alamosa, the population density of the rest of the heritage area is approximately half that.

The Need for Community Revitalization

Many parts of many communities in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area reflect the lack of prosperity that has plagued the rural economy of the San Luis Valley – indeed, rural economies across the United States – for many years. Unemployment is high and the population is smaller than ever in many parts of the region. Agriculture is more mechanized, needing fewer farmers and farm employees. Economic shifts and external economic conditions have taken their toll. Handsome buildings show signs of neglect and communities exhibit the stress of maintaining the public domain – streets, sidewalks, public open space, etc. – without adequate public funding.

There is a chicken-and-egg problem here. As a whole, the National Heritage Area’s communities display the original investment and charm of their builders. It is a struggle, however, for local governments to find funds for the vigorous maintenance, streetscaping, and public capital improvements that would send positive signals to private investors. Private investment in new retail, dining, and lodging opportunities, compatible new development, and adaptive use of existing buildings is needed, but investors are wary without signs of government commitment that will help attract a critical mass of customers and other investors. Conversely, without the economic engine of private entrepreneurship, local governments are hard put to generate an income for highly visible improvements. Under current economic conditions, they play a holding game at best, working to make modest repairs and improvements as and when funds can be pieced together.
The National Heritage Area’s community traditions and identity are held dear by residents. Without addressing the physical needs of communities, as places where traditions and identity are shared, it is possible to fray the ties that bind – experiencing a vicious cycle as physical losses beget more community losses, and more community losses cause more physical disinvestment. The National Heritage Area recognizes communities’ physical needs and will work in common with community leaders and residents to address them effectively. Funds may be hard to come by, but it is possible to identify ways to work smarter, step by step, with an eye toward the long term.

Based upon conversations with local individuals during workshops held before and during the planning process, the Board of Directors developed a set of goals for this management plan that are presented in Chapter 1; those relevant to this chapter appear in a nearby sidebar. In addition, the Board presented preliminary ideas for action for public review. The legislation, goals, and public discussion have provided the basis for the actions and guidance text offered in this chapter.

During public review, participants tended to focus their comments more on the interpretive, educational, and heritage tourism aspects of what they expect to see in this plan. Their expectation was clear, however, that community benefits will flow from the National Heritage Area’s programs, including community revitalization. Heritage tourism was acknowledged as the leading edge of the “economic viability” mentioned in the legislation, but reviewers also strongly encouraged support for small business, farmers, and artists, and branding that could bring these entrepreneurs needed recognition. Some of these ideas are addressed not only in this chapter, but also in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition.

San Luis Custom Cycles occupies an early-twentieth-century motor garage in San Luis, a modern evolution from its original use. A story from the planning team’s visit in 2010: one team member’s car turned up with a flat tire at the end of a tour of the town. Demonstrating the pleasures of extraordinary hospitality to the weary visitors, the owner cheerfully fixed it in 20 minutes and refused payment.

The Planning Foundation for Community Revitalization

The National Heritage Area’s enabling legislation (Public Law 111–11, Title VII, Subtitle A) provides the basis for the ideas in this chapter, including the following language drawn from Sec. 8001(c) and (d):

- The management plan that guides the “management entity” (the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors) “must include comprehensive policies, strategies and recommendations for conservation, funding, management, and development of the Heritage Area”; and
- The Secretary of the Interior, “For purposes of carrying out the management plan [and] acting through the management entity” may spend funds authorized in the legislation to “encourage by appropriate means economic viability that is consistent with the Heritage Area.”
- A description of actions that governments, private organizations, and individuals have agreed to take to protect the natural, historical and cultural resources of the heritage area.

Small Business Assistance

Colorado’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network is dedicated to helping small businesses throughout Colorado achieve their goals by providing free confidential counseling and various training programs. The SBDC combines information and resources from federal, state, and local governments with those of the educational system and the private sector to meet the specialized and complex needs of the small business community. Regulatory, management, financial, and marketing experts work in partnership with entrepreneurs to provide them with crucial information that can mean the difference between success and failure. The SBDC office serving the San Luis Valley, known as the SLV Small Business Development Center, covers six counties: Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache. (http://slv-small-biz-success.blogspot.com/)
La Jara’s mostly Hispano population is descended from pioneers who arrived in the early 1850’s to settle on Spanish land grants. The town traces its birth to the arrival of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad in 1880 and its two-block main street - wide enough to permit a horse-drawn wagon to turn around - grew up to serve the surrounding ranching and farming district. Today, La Jara is one of Conejos County’s five incorporated towns (pop. 877). Although it has a healthy number of businesses plus a school, the county hospital, and a federal public lands information office, its commercial district has suffered from proximity to Alamosa’s shopping and services just 15 miles away. The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad (which still also moves freight on its line through La Jara) has offered a stop for visitors at the depot of the former Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. The 1911 building has served as the town hall since 1970. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was recently rehabilitated with support from the State Historical Fund.

Exisitng Programs for Community Revitalization

There are three primary organizations established to support economic and business development in the San Luis Valley: The state and federally supported SLV Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Adams State University Community Partnerships Program (Community Partnerships), and the nonprofit San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, known as the DRG (see sidebars). There are other organizations that offer services, forums, or means of collaboration, from the Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council, which provides basic information about the region in regularly updated brochure (www.urgedc.com), to the Valley Community Fund, a community foundation that operates an employee payroll donation program that supports nonprofit programs (http://valleycommunityfund.com/index.php). Local business and tourism groups round out the organizational context in which the National Heritage Area can address community revitalization.

In general the three primary organizations developed to pursue economic and community development serve the entire San Luis Valley and focus on a wide variety of programs. The DRG taps a number of federal programs and operates a revolving loan fund to support investment in business development. Of five sectors identified by the DRG in its 2008 San Luis Valley Targeted Industry Study, three relate to topics in this management plan: tourism, especially but not limited to recreation; agriculture, specifically “long-
term niche markets,” which the report stated “may offer the greatest economic potential for many producers and the region”; and “place-based development.” Community Partnerships has sponsored a variety of community forums and expos, and has emphasized community traditions and the arts. The SBDC, like those found in communities across the nation, focuses on serving small business owners through training and advisory services.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION**

The heritage area’s role in community revitalization is to be “aggressively supportive.” We will work with partnering communities, looking for ideas for community revitalization that reinforce other programs of the National Heritage Area or which can arise from the influence of those programs. The National Heritage Area is to be a long-term presence, advocating for smart investment in planning and projects that capitalize on the region’s singular heritage and unique qualities. The aim is to strengthen and revitalize communities in the ways that the communities themselves desire through community-based initiatives. Heritage area programs emphasize encouraging local, heritage-related businesses and attracting visitors through heritage tourism. In addition to helping to diversify the regional economy, every dollar invested in locally owned heritage businesses and heritage tourism is a dollar that will also benefit residents and the region’s quality of life.

A heritage area cannot change the economic dynamic here alone – communities need basics in terms of economic development, job training, business growth, and public investment in infrastructure, schools, and other community needs. As described in a preceding section here, there are existing programs designed to address these needs. The National Heritage Area’s role is to shine a light on new and less well-understood opportunities, and work in collaboration with existing programs to advocate for these ideas.

The National Heritage Area can provide encouragement, ideas, assistance, standards, promotion, and support for communities’ and private businesses’ many endeavors. All other things being equal, faced with choices among projects to encourage, a basic approach for the heritage area is to select projects that offer opportunities for stimulating community revitalization and enhancement as they also achieve other goals.

**San Luis Valley Development Resources Group**

The San Luis Valley Development Resources Group (the DRG) is “noted for our innovative approach to both economic and community-self development projects.” Its mission is “to promote and facilitate economic development programs which will create jobs, improve income, and maintain our quality of life in the San Luis Valley and it offers “the six counties and 18 communities of the San Luis Valley the tools and resources they need to create self-sustaining economic and community development programs.”

The DRG administers Colorado’s Enterprise Zone Program in the valley, a well-established revolving loan fund, and the region’s designated Economic Development District through the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Economic Development Administration (EDA), established in 1984, and in general enables local governments and businesses to navigate the myriad federal and state programs designed to assist them with economic development. ([http://www.slvdrg.org/](http://www.slvdrg.org/))

**All other things being equal, faced with choices among projects to encourage, a basic approach for the heritage area is to select projects that offer opportunities for stimulating community revitalization and enhancement as they also achieve other goals.**

The Palace Hotel, built of cut stone in 1890, is one of Antonito’s (and the San Luis Valley’s) most distinctive buildings. Thanks to expanding railroad service and its location at the junction of the Rio Grande Railroad’s line to Chama, Durango, and the San Juan Mountains plus its branch to Santa Fe, Antonito became an important trade center at the end of the 19th century. The Palace Hotel at the center of town served salesmen, wool merchants, and tourists. Though listed in the National Register of Historic Places and most recently still in use as a hotel, it has been mothballed by its private owner and awaits favorable circumstances for its reopening.
• Establish a community revitalization program through which communities are encouraged to develop plans and programs customized to their interests and capabilities: Key strategies for the heritage area’s approach to community revitalization are to support local community interests and initiatives, strengthen community capabilities, and enhance quality of life for residents. Communities are encouraged to use heritage area strategies and programs to craft their own, individualized plans. The National Heritage Area can provide support and technical assistance in developing and implementing community revitalization plans.

• Encourage communities to use community interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their community revitalization plans: The heritage area envisions that heritage tourism could provide a significant economic boost to local communities and be a foundation for community revitalization and enhancement. A key strategy, therefore, is to assist communities in identifying steps for becoming “visitor ready” – that is, to provide a high-quality visitor experience.

• Establish a quality assurance program to recognize the efforts of participating visitor service providers and interpretive sites: Participants in this program would apply for the ability to display a heritage area emblem in their signage and marketing materials, and would participate in special heritage area-wide promotions and marketing. They would become on-the-ground “ambassadors” for the heritage area.

• Create a San Luis Valley/Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brand for local products representative of local character and culture: This idea follows from the preceding strategy for a recognition program, and is a longer term effort to be carried out in collaboration with regional organizations. The concept is to make potential buyers aware of the quality and character of the region’s products, including the place from whence they come.

• Encourage local entrepreneurs: Businesses reflecting local culture are well within the interest of the heritage area, such as purveyors of the region’s arts and crafts and locally grown and processed foods. Businesses providing visitor services are also important. And what better settings for such businesses than our historic commercial areas?

These objectives and strategies are described in more detail in the sections that follow.

The Rialto Building in downtown Alamosa was constructed in 1925 by the American Legion as a lodge hall and served the community for years as a venue for plays, music, vaudeville, talent shows, and movies. While its interior performance space could not be preserved after a fire, the facade of this critical link in Alamosa’s historic commercial district was saved when the building was rehabilitated and adapted for use as a restaurant and catering facility. The building is now listed on the City of Alamosa’s local register of historic places and featured on the Alamosa Historic District Walking Tour (courtesy Alamosa Historic Preservation Committee).

Adams State University Community Partnerships Program

The mission of Adams State Community Partnerships is to connect university resources with the community “in order to increase the quality of life for all residents of the San Luis Valley.” Funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of University Partnerships, the program focuses its efforts in five areas:

• Community organizing (encouraging dialogue between the academic and the local community to identify ways for the university to address community needs);
• business support (http://bsc.adams.edu/);
• arts and culture, including the operation of a gallery in its campus office;
• service learning opportunities for students that match them with community organizations; and
• the Novela Project (described in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions). http://www.adams.edu/community/partnerships/index.php
Creating Community Revitalization Plans

Participating communities are encouraged to prepare voluntary Community Revitalization Plans to identify ways in which the National Heritage Area can support local interests and initiatives. Community Revitalization Plans are to be prepared by local communities with heritage area guidance and support and must demonstrate the support of residents and community leaders. Upon approval, the plan will become part of the guidance for implementation of the heritage area management plan and incorporated into heritage area programming. Preparation should be undertaken in accordance with the following steps:

1. Organize a working group that is representative of the range of local community interests and has the official support of community leaders.
2. Meet with National Heritage Area staff to review guidelines, processes, and requirements and to discuss how the heritage area may assist the planning process.
3. Prepare a brief overview of existing conditions within the community, including background, opportunities and assets, and potential challenges. The summaries of existing conditions appended to this plan might serve as models.
4. Identify goals for community revitalization that reflect the expressed interests of local residents, property owners, and businesses. Goals should be realistic and within the capabilities of community organizations to implement.
5. Identify strategies for achieving community revitalization goals and potential projects for implementing those strategies. Align with and make use of strategies and programs identified in the heritage area management plan where possible.
6. Review potential strategies and projects with local residents, property owners, and businesses to receive input. Review strategies and projects with heritage area staff to receive input. Refine strategies and projects and outline how implementation would be phased. Obtain the official approval of community leaders, including elected leaders and organizations that might be expected to implement aspects of the plan.
7. Combine the existing conditions summary, strategies, projects, and phasing into a single planning document, the Community Revitalization Plan. Include expected implementation costs and a phasing schedule. The plan can be as short or as long as a community needs in order to achieve clarity and consensus. Brisk timing and purposeful meetings are virtues in such a community planning process; plain and simple language and brevity are virtues in the final document.
8. Submit the Community Revitalization Plan to heritage area staff for preliminary review and to be sure that required elements are included and complete. Upon such assurance, the plan will be submitted to the Board of Directors for review and approval.
Each participating community will craft its own revitalization program in accordance with the interests of its residents. As presented in preceding chapters of this management plan, areas of potential activity include:

- **The preservation and enhancement of historic resources** in communities as described in Chapter 4 to strengthen community character; in particular, actions related to the development of community partnerships and technical assistance and financial support for projects as outlined there.

- **Conservation and recreation** as described in Chapter 5, especially the enhancement of publicly owned natural resources and trails and support for recreation-based businesses.

- **Community engagement and the strengthening of community heritage and traditions** as described in Chapter 6. A wide range of possible programs and activities are discussed here that can support community revitalization, including support for the arts, folk music and dance, cultural programs and events, youth programs, and local foods and agriculture.

- **Community interpretation and heritage tourism** to support local businesses and community revitalization as described in Chapters 7 and 8, especially the community designation program and actions presented under the section in Chapter 7 entitled ‘Community Presentations’ and discussed further below.

Every community within the heritage area is invited to participate, including communities that are not necessarily interested in heritage tourism aspects of the management plan. Participating communities are asked to organize themselves in a way that demonstrates local commitment and support and the ability to implement the initiatives they choose to undertake.

Community Revitalization Plans should be created by participating communities with heritage area guidance and support (see sidebar). Community Revitalization Plans should describe existing conditions within the community, goals and strategies for revitalization, and phased steps that will be undertaken to implement strategies and achieve goals. Once approved by the Board of Directors, a local Community Revitalization Plan will become part of the guidance for implementing the heritage area management plan, and the National Heritage Area partnership will seek resources to support its implementation. Such resources might include funding, technical assistance, and incorporation into heritage area programs as appropriate (marketing and promotion, for instance). Heritage area support will depend upon the availability of resources and the prioritization of projects in accordance with heritage area goals.

During preparation of the management plan, the Board of Directors, staff, and consultant team worked with community representatives from Antonito, San Luis, and Alamosa on potential revitalization strategies. The results of this work are included in Appendix E of the plan. These efforts could form the basis for the early creation of revitalization plans for these three communities, which in turn could provide a
models for the development of revitalization plans for other communities.

**ACTION** Establish a Community Revitalization Program through which participating heritage area communities are encouraged to develop revitalization plans customized to their own interests and capabilities based on strategies, programs, and actions outlined in the management plan.

**ACTION** Provide guidelines and assistance to interested communities in the development and implementation of Community Revitalization Plans in accordance with heritage area goals, principles, and processes.

**ACTION** Work with local economic development agencies to participate in and support the revitalization process and to identify place-based development strategies for older commercial areas.

**ACTION** Work with partnering organizations to identify and obtain resources, including funding and technical assistance, that can be used to help develop, support, and implement approved Community Revitalization Plans.

**ACTION** Create a Community Revitalization Grant Program to support participating communities in the development and implementation of Community Revitalization Plans.

**COMMUNITY INTERPRETATION AND HERITAGE TOURISM**

This plan envisions that heritage tourism could provide a significant economic boost to local communities and be a foundation for community revitalization and enhancement. Participating communities are encouraged to consider interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their community revitalization plans, discussed above. Assisting communities in becoming ready for visitors and in providing a high-quality visitor experience as a basis for community revitalization is a key strategy for the heritage area.

Chapter 7 presents the heritage area’s interpretive plan, including the significant role of local communities, and Chapter 8 addresses heritage tourism and visitor experience. Communities are expected to respond to opportunities to interpret community heritage, meet visitor needs for orientation and services, and articulate possibilities for community revitalization that could stem from a “company’s coming” focus on heritage tourism. Chapter 7 calls for designating heritage area communities according to their potential and desire for accommodating visitors and interpreting their heritage, as “Cornerstone Communities,” “Valley Communities,” and “Heritage Communities.”

Proposed Cornerstone Communities are the four communities located near entry points into the heritage area that are capable of providing a full range of visitor services: Antonito, San Luis, Fort Garland, and Alamosa. They will be asked to host orientation exhibits for visitors and to provide a high level of community interpretation featuring creative exhibits, artwork, and streetscape enhancements. Each should also provide a local visitor center providing visitor information. The establishment of a high-quality visitor experience in these four communities is an essential strategy.

Site of the future Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center in San Luis, which is undergoing rehabilitation to remove the 1980’s-era solar arrays and revive the heritage center uses served by the building until the town’s museum was closed in the last decade. It was built of adobe in the 1940’s in the Pueblo Revival style as a training center by the federal Depression-era Works Progress Administration. Both Adams State University and the local school district long operated it for educational uses.
in meeting this plan’s goal of strengthening heritage tourism within the region, and therefore strengthening revitalization efforts of participating communities throughout the heritage area.

Valley Communities are other communities within the National Heritage Area offering visitor services. Participation is completely voluntary, to be undertaken in accordance with criteria to be established by the heritage area, including standards for quality and hospitality training. A minimum level of visitor services required for designation includes a restaurant (or food market where take-out meals may be purchased) and the availability of public restrooms. Representative communities include La Jara, Manassa, Sanford, and Blanca. Hooper has a special Valley Community role as a northern entrance into the National Heritage Area.

Heritage Communities are communities without visitor services that wish to participate in the National Heritage Area’s interpretive presentation. These include many historically significant communities with important stories that are central to the San Luis Valley’s historical experience. Community engagement initiatives, discussed in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition, may take precedence over interpretation to visitors depending upon the desires and capabilities of each community.

**ACTION** Encourage participating communities to consider interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their Community Revitalization Plans.

**ACTION** Encourage towns with historic commercial areas to plan governmental investment and programs for encouraging private investment and improving the visitor experience.

**ACTION** Create a system of community entry signs to support the National Heritage Area’s community designation program.

**ESTABLISHING A QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM**

A quality assurance program takes advantage of a particular insight from heritage tourism experience in many communities: Visitors will be more likely to venture off the beaten track to find places if they are first assured of an excellent experience. Businesses participating in this program would apply for the ability to display a heritage area emblem in their signage and marketing materials, and would participate in special heritage area-wide training, promotions, and marketing. They would become on-the-ground “ambassadors” for the heritage area.

In general, public tourism-marketing programs work to encourage visitors to get to the general region or place they are marketing. Once visitors arrive, they and the providers who want them as customers are more or less on their own to connect. Basic listings may be available on a web site or in a visitor guide, but the providers must undertake their own advertising. The heritage area’s program would be a way for providers to gain additional marketing exposure in a unique fashion that visitors especially appreciate. The special relationship established between the heritage area and participating businesses and sites would also yield information that would strengthen the heritage area’s ability to perceive and meet businesses’ needs in serving visitors.

To create the program, the heritage area will work with potential candidates and other community advisors to establish criteria, guidelines, and benefits for participation. Programs to support participants could be such things as an awards program, a “best of” event or listing, or an annual cook-off. The hospitality training program described in Chapter 8 will be especially important in providing training for participants so they can readily achieve standards, and may be the first activity of a phased effort to put a broader quality assurance program in place. Participants might be asked to develop interpretation of their business’s heritage, or the family heritage that inspired the business, or to develop cooperative relationships with local providers of food or craft products to emphasize the cultural connections of the business to the heritage area.

**ACTION** Establish a quality assurance program with standards, guidance, and training in order to give local businesses seeking visitors as customers the opportunity to participate in special heritage area-wide promotions and marketing.
ACTION Design a program to enable participants in the quality assurance program to display approved heritage area branding.

ACTION Establish an awards program and other programs to provide benefits to businesses participating in the quality assurance program.

ACTION Offer hospitality training, complete with certificates, to businesses based in the National Heritage Area (whether or not they choose to move forward into the quality assurance program). Encourage such partners as the Colorado Scenic Byways Program to offer or sponsor hospitality training.

**CREATING A REGIONAL BRAND FOR LOCAL PRODUCTS**

Creation of a regional brand is a logical enhancement to the preceding strategy of creating a program recognizing businesses making a special effort to assure visitors of high-quality experiences. It offers a longer term opportunity and should be carried out in collaboration with other regional organizations, especially the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group. The DRG’s 2008 *San Luis Valley Targeted Industry Study* specifically suggests such an idea, especially in relation to agricultural products. The concept is to make potential buyers aware of the quality and character of the region’s products, including the place from whence they come.

Cooperative advertising would be a large benefit for affiliated products. The region’s arts and crafts and locally grown and processed foods are especially well suited to such a unique cooperative advertising proposition. An extra benefit for the heritage area is that each product so branded becomes an ambassador to buyers, who learn about the special nature of the region with every purchase they make.

ACTION Work with San Luis Valley-based and Colorado state partners to create a regional brand for local products. Promote the heritage area as part of the experience of visiting the San Luis Valley as a source of high-quality products.
Encouraging Local Entrepreneurs

As with the strategies above, businesses reflecting local culture are well within the interest of the heritage area, such as purveyors of the region’s arts and crafts and locally grown and processed foods. Businesses providing visitor services are also important, especially but not limited to those offering one-of-a-kind opportunities for visitors, such as outfitters, bed-and-breakfast lodging, artists’ studio-galleries, or farms offering “agri-tourism” experiences. There are such businesses in the region, but more are needed to provide that all-important critical mass that will assure visitors to this rural region that there so many opportunities to enjoy themselves that they can regard the region as a whole as a destination worthy of spending time there. As with the mutual reinforcement of governmental and private investment in historic commercial areas, this is another chicken-and-egg problem – the visitor first, or the business? – since a key trigger for investment in such businesses is the assurance that there will be enough of a market from visitors (as well as residents). The heritage area can encourage “clusters” of such businesses in order to reassure visitors that the National Heritage Area offers the variety they crave.

ACTION: Work with local economic development agencies to develop strategies to attract and support local businesses providing services and products that visitors interested in heritage, recreation, local foods, and the arts will enjoy.

ACTION: Work with local economic development agencies to develop strategies to target reuse of older buildings for heritage tourism-related businesses.

The San Luis Valley has been blessed with smart and innovative business development programs for decades. Our strategy here relies on those programs; they are fundamental to entrepreneurial success and there is no need for duplication. Where the heritage area can join in supporting entrepreneurs and existing business advisors is in providing insight into the particular businesses, markets, and marketing involved. National Heritage Areas across the nation have been pioneering in such strategies for years. The heritage area can also advise on historic preservation issues related to business locations in older buildings (and the potential tax advantages of doing so). Such businesses are especially well-suited to being housed in buildings in existing commercial areas – precisely the places where entrepreneurial energy is needed most to revitalize communities.
Chapter 10 • Management & Implementation

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, advisors, and the consultant team meet in the fall of 2010 at the Sanford Museum to kick off the management planning process.

Introduction

This management plan is intended for implementation over the next 10 to 15 years. To oversee the programs, relationships, funding, personnel, and other factors needed for implementing the many and widely varied strategies identified in the preceding chapters of this plan, the heritage area needs a management entity capable of acting over a long term. This chapter describes the actions that the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors – the heritage area’s managing entity designated under the legislation establishing the heritage area (Public Law 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001) – will take to support the heritage area and to grow as the heritage area itself evolves. This chapter outlines a plan for achieving:

- Effective long-term governance by the management entity, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, with mechanisms for setting priorities and carrying them out;

- Partnerships among many organizations, institutions, agencies, and community groups – a critical strategy and “first principle” for accomplishing the actions in this plan, requiring excellent communications and much collaboration;

- Visibility to the public and a wide variety of audiences within and beyond the heritage area’s boundaries;

- Establishment of vigorous relationships with supporters and a fundraising program to build financial stability and the funding and other resources needed to implement this plan; and

- Ways to evaluate progress in implementing this plan and results of the considerable investment required to develop the National Heritage Area to its full potential. This provides accountability to the heritage area’s many supporters, including the federal National Heritage Area program, which provides special public funding to support this National Heritage Area and 48 others.

The Planning Foundation for Management

Planning for the management of the National Heritage Area and implementation of this management plan takes
place within a series of increasingly detailed guidances, beginning with the federal legislation that established the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, as discussed in Chapter 1, A Vision for the Heritage Area. (Relevant sections of this legislation are cited throughout this chapter.) The management planning process confirmed an existing mission statement, established a vision, and set goals, as described in Chapter 1. Finally, the planning process provided a structured way to consider choices for programs, management, and priorities, as described in preceding chapters.

**Strategic Objectives for Management and Implementation**

The approach to management described in this chapter involves five strategic objectives:

- **Organize for leadership:** In pursuing its mission and implementing this plan, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors will communicate the management plan’s vision, provide a forum for key players affecting heritage development in the region, and articulate high standards for the visitor experience. The organization of the Board of Directors and its committees and staff is designed for efficiency and to engage partners in the heritage area.

- **Cultivate partnerships:** Partners are critical in carrying out this plan. This chapter rounds out the descriptions of partnership approaches in the preceding “mission chapters” (4-9) by describing ways for coordinating various activities and entities. A key feature is “partnership development,” that is, deploying the resources of the National Heritage Area in ways that reinforce the capacity of partners to implement this plan. Insights and leadership from participants running local programs will be important — and participants must strengthen their own leadership and contribute to local programs.

- **Seek visibility:** The National Heritage Area must come alive in the minds of all who participate in its development – programs that stimulate communication among partners and enable the public to access more information from the National Heritage Area are critical. The National Heritage Area needs a large and appreciative audience, built through more visibility and marketing, for its interpretive and heritage tourism programs.

- **Develop resources and raise funds:** Raising the necessary resources to support the programs that will implement this entire plan is critical. “Resources” are defined broadly to include in-kind and volunteer services and donations, and relationship-building through “resource development” is considered the basic activity that supports the raising of funds.

- **Evaluate and celebrate progress:** The Board of Directors will measure and evaluate its work and that of National Heritage Area partners in order to understand how well the heritage area is doing in implementing this plan and how National Heritage Area funds support the public interest. It must organize adjustments as needed in priorities and work plans, but as important, it must inform the public about progress in meeting the promise of this plan.

**Organizing for Leadership**

As with all boards of directors, in its role as the National Heritage Area’s management entity and otherwise as the body responsible for a nonprofit organization, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors sets policy and direction. This includes “buck stops here” operational authority – it makes spending decisions in the form of an annual budget and hires and guides staff and supporting services in managing the heritage area’s day-to-day operations.

The role of the Board of Directors is also to communicate the management plan’s vision, provide a forum for key players affecting heritage tourism development in the region, articulate high standards for the visitor experience, and track and celebrate the heritage area’s progress.

The Board is also responsible for securing the resources needed to support its operations and the programs of the National Heritage Area — with the involvement of partners wherever possible. In particular, the Board of Directors will spend federal funds and local matching (“cost share”)
funds – including but not limited to sharing federal funds with partners through matching grants. This topic is addressed further in a separate section of this chapter.

Furthermore, the Board of Directors is the advocate for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s goals and programs among local, state, and federal governmental partners. Especially at the federal level, the Board speaks for the National Heritage Area in relation to the national program operated by the National Park Service.

The Board of Directors is not, in and of itself, the heritage area – the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a collective effort, involving organizations and agencies represented on the Board of Directors and others with a stake in the success of the heritage area. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors is named in Public Law 111-11 as the heritage area’s “management entity.” That legislation specifically charges the Board of Directors with “assist[ing] units of local government, regional planning organizations, and nonprofit organizations in carrying out the approved management plan” (Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(c)(2)). That is to say, the Board of Directors is not responsible on its own for implementing this plan.

The underlying assumption in this plan, therefore, is that many heritage area projects are to be undertaken by local partners within their own communities under the auspices of heritage area programming and networking. However, there are certain heritage area-wide strategies for which the Board of Directors is responsible which should be noted here. The Board’s energy and creativity in pursuing these strategies will be critical in encouraging partners in their own initiatives:

- Creating a sense of connection across the entire National Heritage Area, so that visitors can experience one place in many ways – focusing on interpretive techniques and physical linkages, including wayfinding signage, a strategy addressed primarily in Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation;

- Creating the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Communities designation program (described in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9) in order to weave all communities into the National Heritage Area as a unified concept with singular communities sharing their stories; and

- Operating a website and associated digital media to create connection and sense of place through electronic communications.

Given the great variety of work that the Board of Directors is to undertake in implementing this plan, it is important to focus closely on how to manage the Board effectively, how to focus Board actions strategically, and how to evaluate progress. The following sections address the first two topics in detail and a separate section at the end of this chapter addresses evaluation.

Guiding Principles

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors embraces the following principles for heritage area management:

- Meaningful partner and community engagement;
- Continually telling the story and promoting the vision;
- Responsiveness to local needs and priorities;
- An open, inclusive, collaborative, and flexible approach to operations; and
- A willingness to try new approaches and a commitment to implementing what is learned in the process of experimenting and growing.

A Big-picture Checklist for Examining Progress

The following three goals will guide the activities of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area:

- **Primary Goal 1**: Support development of a vibrant heritage tourism sector that stimulates preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.
- **Primary Goal 2**: Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization.
- **Primary Goal 3**: Cultivate excellent management that provides regional leadership, reflects community values, and achieves sustainability.

Thirteen sub-goals apply to individual topics in the management plan as shown below (five apply to more than one topic and are repeated, 1-1, 1-3, 2-6, and 3-10, with 2-9 being shown three times). It is simpler to organize agendas to evaluate progress around just seven chapter topics, plus an agenda item focusing discussion on resource development (fundraising):

- **Historic Preservation (Chapter 4)**
  - Goal 1-2, Historic Preservation: Support the preservation, use/reuse, rehabilitation, and/or restoration of historic buildings as a top priority in all heritage development projects.

- **Conservation and Recreation (Chapter 5)**
  - Goal 1-4, Outdoor Recreation: Sustain, enhance, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities as a means of stimulating heritage tourism and as a significant element of our heritage.
  - Goal 1-5, Land Stewardship & Natural Resources: Partner with and support the work of organizations working to protect the land, agriculture, and natural resources of the region, as a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape and as a critical contributor to regional economic health.

- **Conserving Community & Tradition (Chapter 6)**
  - Goal 1-3, Business Development: Foster business retention, expansion, and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships, especially in the context of enhancing towns and agriculture as critical contributors to regional economic health.
  - Goal 2-6, Interpretation: Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth.
  - Goal 2-7, Culture & Community: Protect and celebrate living heritage resources – language, art, traditions, spirituality, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.
  - Goal 2-8, Agriculture: Promote and interpret agriculture as a way of life, a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape, and as a critical contributor to regional economic health.
  - Goal 2-9, Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.
  - Goal 3-12, Engaging our Young People: Stimulate involvement of young people in all aspects of the National Heritage Area’s work, learning opportunities, and participation.

- **Interpretation (Chapter 7)**
  - Goal 2-6, Interpretation: Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth.
  - Goal 2-9, Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

- **Heritage Tourism and Marketing (Chapter 8)**
  - Goal 1-1, Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism: Increase visitation through heritage development projects and events and promotion of heritage tourism and hospitality in order to stimulate heritage preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.
Community Revitalization (Chapter 9)
- Goal 1-1, Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism: Increase visitation through heritage development projects and events and promotion of heritage tourism and hospitality in order to stimulate heritage preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.
- Goal 1-3, Business Development: Foster business retention, expansion, and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships, especially in the context of enhancing towns and agriculture as critical contributors to regional economic health.

Resource Development (Chapter 10)
- Goal 3-10, Organization & Management: Strengthen the organization’s capacity to achieve its mission through a strong and diverse board of directors, resourceful collaboration and alliances, regular measurement of progress in implementing the management plan, financial stability and expanded funding, and sufficient staffing.

Management (Chapter 10)
- Goal 2-9, Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.
- Goal 3-10, Organization & Management: Strengthen the organization’s capacity to achieve its mission through a strong and diverse board of directors, resourceful collaboration and alliances, regular measurement of progress in implementing the management plan, financial stability and expanded funding, and sufficient staffing.
- Goal 3-11, Communications: Establish open and consistent communication with partnering organizations, governmental representatives, and the public; build recognition for the National Heritage Area and those involved in its progress.
- Goal 3-13, Partner Development: Stand behind partners; assist and lend credibility to their endeavors. Emphasize networking, skill-sharing, coalitions, joint ventures, and other working relationships among partners as the primary means of building the heritage area and accomplishing its goals in a mutually beneficial way.

Managing the Work of the Board of Directors
The Board of Directors’ programs, projects, and routine operations help to implement the management plan. The Board’s meetings should not focus on the details of these, however. Rather, they are the place where directors step back from day-to-day concerns to ask three key questions:

1. “How is the management plan being implemented and what is our progress on our vision?”
2. “How is the heritage area obtaining the resources for implementation?”
3. “How are we doing as an organization?”

A standard agenda built around the management plan’s topics, examining the Board of Directors’ goals associated with each, will help to address these questions (see sidebar, “A Big-picture Checklist for Examining Progress”). Projects, programs, policies, and information items to be discussed would be grouped by management plan topics. Thus, a potential general agenda would be:

- Historic Preservation
- Conservation and Recreation (includes stewardship of land and natural resources plus outdoor recreation)
- Conserving Community and Tradition (includes local arts, agriculture, youth, community outreach)
- Interpretation (includes community outreach)
- Heritage Tourism and Marketing
- Community Revitalization (includes business and community groups established to support community revitalization planning)
- Resource Development (fundraising, communications with potential funders)
- Visibility and Communications (a cross-cutting topic that includes community outreach along with actual communications and messaging, e.g., website, electronic newsletter, branding, publications)
- Partner Development (a cross-cutting topic that should look at how strategies for assisting partners under other topics stack up across all activities)

Another way to organize the Board, once all program committees are in place, would be to organize it around those committees, discussed below, with the committees responsible for assuring the Board that progress is being made, and how, on management plan topics.
In either case, the point here is that construction of an agenda is a critical task in managing the Board’s involvement and oversight – and in setting the stage for the equally critical tasks described in a section below on evaluation.

Where the Board of Directors is to provide leadership for specific programs or projects, committees can take the lead on the details, as discussed in the next section. Time will be a precious resource for accomplishing many programs and projects. It may be desirable to meet as a full board only four to six times a year, reserving the remaining monthly (more or less) meeting times as time devoted to committee work. Committees would check in with the Board for direction as appropriate to the “big picture” level of discussion to be sustained in Board meetings, taking responsibility for reporting and leading Board discussion.

The Board of Directors’ own growth and development, its culture, and its relationships deserve directors’ attention. Routine examination of the third question here is healthy and can be a topic of committee discussion using surveys and interviews with individual directors. Discussion of organizational growth can reinforce the learning experience and help the Board make beneficial changes.

**ACTION:** For meetings of the Board of Directors, organize a standing agenda around the topics of the management plan and resource development in order to maintain focus on achieving the heritage area’s mission, vision, and goals.

**ACTION:** Undertake annual board training focusing on important issues where education and discussion will benefit the development of a sound corporate culture.

**Program Committees**

Meetings of the Board of Directors will focus on the big picture – are we achieving the goals of our management plan? What is our strategic plan for the next three years? – and major decisions for which the Board only must be responsible. Discussion of projects and partner, Board, and staff activities is generally best handled in committees. For a National Heritage Area with the scope of this one, meetings focusing on the many activities happening around the region and within the organization and partners’ committees could take a great deal of time indeed.

Fully functioning committees can make a board far more effective in the long run. They can meet routinely and more frequently as needed, they allow directors to relate directly to staff who are responsible for programs that directors find particularly interesting, and they can make enough time to permit adequate focus on issues that need directors’ input. Knowledgeable committee chairs can then report to the board as a whole, in relation to a standing agenda and help to lead any discussion needed at the board level.

The bylaws for the Board of Directors spell out a flexible procedure for establishing committees that leaves the scope of such committees to the board. Just as the bylaws do, this management plan leaves the establishment of committees to the Board’s discretion.

The Board’s meetings up to the conclusion of the management planning process have been project-oriented, which is standard startup mode for heritage areas. For any nonprofit organization, a focus on projects can build board cohesion and experience – they are easy to understand, and most board members have project experience to lend to the discussion, providing a powerful learning mode for board discussion and relationship-building.

With the completion of this plan and the early-action phase that included projects along with conducting management planning, the Board of Directors can now begin to rely on committees to provide project leadership. The shift can take some time to accomplish, and can be done in phases, perhaps by selecting one programmatic committee to establish first, ahead of others, where it is most important to get the work done, and where board members interested in the particular details of various projects can be more deeply involved.
Program committees offer the opportunity to involve non-board members to help share the workload, familiarize partners with the Board and heritage area programs, and cultivate future leaders. Such partnership is critical for long-term success. Moreover, the board will seek to maintain transparent operations by involving partners in program design and other organizational decisions.

Committees organized toward the end of the management planning process provided the Board of Directors with experience in addressing the topics in this plan. Four committees proved to be a more efficient structure than creating six committees assigned to the six “mission chapters” (the seventh topic is this chapter, the broad responsibility of the Board and not requiring a separate committee):

1. Historic Preservation (Chapter 4) and Community Revitalization (Chapter 9)
2. Conservation and Recreation (Chapter 5)
3. Conserving Community Traditions, Education, and Interpretation (Chapters 6 and 7)
4. Heritage Tourism and Marketing (Chapter 8)

As the Board of Directors gains experience, it may also prove helpful to establish two other committees that cut across all of these topics, to focus on communications, described below, and “Partner Development,” as discussed further below. The Partner Development Committee would design programs to support partners, review applications for support, and otherwise insure that every action possible undertaken by the other program committees and the Board of Directors supports partners in useful ways.

In terms of partner involvement in National Heritage Area administration, some heritage areas create a single-standing committee for partners that undertakes a first level of review of programs, projects, grants, etc. – looking broadly across all heritage area programs. It is possible that such a “partners’ committee” (broader than the Board of Directors itself, which is already, in effect, a gathering of representatives of many partners) might evolve over time. To be able to identify the best ways to organize all committees where partners are to play a role, the Board of Directors must first gain experience in operating programs identified in the management plan.

One concern in establishing program committees is how much work is involved for a small board stretched across the many topics that any National Heritage Area must address. This is one argument for involving partner representatives drawn from outside the board itself, and the reason that all committees may not all be established at one time. Committees are needed to manage multiple projects, programs, and policies, and in the startup years, it may be advisable to focus more narrowly on one or two activities related to each management plan topic (see discussion above about board agenda-setting) or program committee assignment. In addition, this concern about “labor resources” also applies to the formation of Community Working Groups, a highly important feature of this plan. The Board of Directors will need to recognize the inherent difficulties in assigning board members to various committees and moreover asking them to participate in Community Working Groups, and set priorities accordingly.

**ACTION:** Establish program committees charged with providing ongoing leadership and detailed review in implementing key programs and projects and addressing critical long-term topics of the management plan. Expect these committees to provide summary reporting in Board of Directors meetings regarding progress toward the goals of the management plan.

**ACTION:** Ask partner representatives to serve on program committees and other kinds of working groups as needed.

**Organizational Committees**

Boards typically must fulfill various administrative functions:

1. **Executive:** Provides a decision-making mode for the staff as needed between meetings – useful especially if the Board moves to a schedule of bimonthly meetings.

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*The exterior rehabilitation of the Alamosa Masonic Hall (1887), the first 19th-century storefront preservation project completed on Alamosa’s Main Street, was funded in part by grants from History Colorado’s State Historical Fund and matching fund support from the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.*
An executive committee may also be a source of advice for the board chair on appointments and other operational responsibilities, and, perhaps, offer an additional layer of review for certain board discussions, such as annual budgets. Review of the executive director’s annual performance and hiring decisions may also be a part of the executive committee’s function.

(2) Finance: In small organizations, the treasurer may be solely responsible for financial record-keeping. As the heritage area’s budget grows, a committee may be helpful in spreading the major burden involved in financial management. The organization will need to address annual and monthly budgeting, ensure adequate reporting and decision making at board meetings, and conduct annual financial reviews or audits. Special to a National Heritage Area, a managing entity must also administer the annual federal grant, including all of the duties pertaining to reporting and auditing laid out in the National Heritage Area’s legislation (P.L.111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(c)(2)(E)(i-iii)). Liability insurance for directors and officers ("D&O insurance"), and other kinds of insurance are other functions associated with a board’s financial responsibilities.

(3) Governance: The organization must work continuously on finding good nominees for board service. This is especially important since the federal legislation that effectively chartered the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors states, “Members of the Board shall include representatives from a broad cross section of the individuals, agencies, organizations, and governments that were involved in the planning and development of the Heritage Area before the date of enactment of this Act” (P.L.111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(b)(4)(B)). From time to time, the organization must also make changes to the bylaws, orient new board members, arrange for board training, and in general ensure that the organization follows best practices for the governance of nonprofit organizations. The surveys and interviews conducted with individual directors in order to answer the “how are we doing?” question discussed above are governance functions.

(4) Resource Development: Fundraising will be a key topic of meeting agendas. The Board will decide whether a standing committee or temporary committees are the best way to address resource development.

(5) Strategic Planning: Routine review of progress on the management plan, program evaluation, communications with program committees, and cycles of strategic planning to support annual staff work planning are all board functions that a committee can serve well.

(6) Personnel and Operations: For staffed organizations especially, boards must spend time on developing policies to support staff. While the executive director should be responsible for hiring, supervision, and performance evaluation, board-developed policies should guide staff operations as needed.

(7) Communications and Public Outreach: The Board understands the important role of ongoing communication with partners and residents. Coordination with tourism marketing is also critical. A responsibility prescribed in the federal legislation that effectively chartered the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors also may fall within this function (or in the strategic planning function), “conduct meetings open to the public at least semiannually regarding the development and implementation of the management plan” (P.L.111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(c)(2)(D)).

(8) Advocacy: The organization may need a way to study whether and when it should step into situations requiring its time and attention to advocate for stewardship or funding concerns. Advocacy is a role to be played by the heritage area, it is true, but it can absorb much staff time and divert board attention from the main task, making sure that the management plan is implemented.

This would be a great many standing committees if each function were to be addressed separately. It is possible, however, to combine functions; the following combinations appear to have the potential to work well for the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors, particularly if leadership for
various functions is spread to several individuals within the committee:

- Executive + Governance + Strategic Planning
- Finance + Personnel & Operations
- Communications & Public Outreach + Advocacy
- Resource Development

Large committees are not always necessary. Another way to spread the load is the “board minder” model, where one or two members of a board or committee are the “go-to” individuals on that function or topic and can assume leadership in discussing that part of the committee’s or board’s overall agenda.

**ACTION:** Organize standing committees around critical organizational functions; be flexible as to committee assignments, membership, and responsibilities. In establishing each committee, provide a specific, written job description.

**ACTION:** Arrange Board of Directors meeting schedules to support directors’ spending time to support committees as well as to attend Board meetings.

**Board Membership and Recruitment**

The skills, experience, and critical interests of directors affect a nonprofit board’s ability as a whole to govern and participate in certain tasks. Boards need variety, good communicators, passionate advocates, and people who are willing to ask for support to help develop resources. For the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, individual directors need not know a great deal about National Heritage Area programs if they are experienced from service on other nonprofit boards, or if they can contribute expertise in such areas as human resource management or fundraising.

Most critical is that directors are devoted to the organization – their first choice for giving time, attention, expertise, and funds should be the Board of Directors. Directors currently serving heritage area partners from staff or board positions must determine whether they can divide what they have to offer between the Board and their other obligations. In any case, the Board of Directors should adopt a code of ethics for handling conflicts of interest where directors serve other organizations that have a stake in the success of the National Heritage Area.

Success in recruiting for all of these purposes depends on (1) communicating clearly during the recruitment process how directors are expected to perform on the board, and (2) enabling new directors to gain a clear picture of the status

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**Colorado’s Community Resource Center**

The Community Resource Center (CRC; http://www.crcamerica.org/default.asp) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides training, technical assistance and consultation to nonprofits and community-based organizations in Colorado and across the country. CRC empowers nonprofits to fulfill their missions by building capacity, strengthening skills, and providing strategies for success. CRC serves as a convener of communities to expand resources and stimulate change. CRC’s mission is to create opportunities, tools and strategies to develop nonprofits and community groups to strengthen Colorado.

CRC has worked with thousands of organizations in both urban and rural communities throughout Colorado. The role of CRC is to assist these organizations in addressing a variety of community issues and problems while building a network of partners and supporters throughout the state. CRC has a reputation for tackling difficult issues with its “hands on” practical approach to organizational problem solving and the development of strong and lasting community leadership. The goal of CRC is, in short, to help other organizations fulfill their missions. CRC is the sponsor of Colorado’s Rural Philanthropy Days (RPD), which is supported by a variety of Colorado funders.
of the organization and its operations, understand what they need to do in response to the organization’s needs, and see how the board as a whole can work together.

**ACTION:** Undertake an evaluation of current representation on the Board of Directors and develop plans for expanding diversity and skill sets to support management plan implementation and resource development, consistent with board composition requirements in P.L. 111-11.

**ACTION:** Develop job descriptions for directors.

**ACTION:** Develop a code of ethics or conflict of interest statement.

**Insuring Excellence**

There is a wealth of information and guidance to be had on the responsible operations of nonprofit organizations, the fiduciary responsibility of nonprofit boards, ethical fundraising, and much more. Colorado is fortunate as one of the few states with an in-state organization devoted to improving nonprofit organizations’ capacity and operations, the Community Resource Center (see sidebar, p. 10-9).

Some nonprofits strive to meet independent, external standards as a way of reassuring those they serve and funders alike that their operations are in good order. In Colorado, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence (see sidebar) maintains a relationship with the national Standards for Excellence Institute, offering workshops on the 55 best practices identified in the institute’s Standards for Excellence curriculum. A good list of sources of information about standards of excellence is compiled by Independent Sector at http://independentsector.org/compendium_of_standards.

**ACTION:** Set basic standards of excellence and let partners, funders, and the public know such standards are part of the Board of Directors’ expectations for doing business.

**COLORADO’S CENTER FOR NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE**

The Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE; http://www.cnecoloradosprings.org/) is a membership-based nonprofit association serving nonprofit organizations in Southern Colorado through member benefits, networking events, resource and leadership development, and educational opportunities. With more than 200 members, the Center provides training and education services, technical assistance, and ongoing networking and partnering opportunities that connect nonprofits with the region’s funding and business communities. The Center’s wide range of products and services are tailored to meet the needs of a varied nonprofit sector, serving the small grassroots organizations as well as the large internationals.

**ACTIONS:** Include nonprofit management topics in training workshops for the Board of Directors.

**Operations**

**Staffing and Support**

The Board of Directors needs staff to manage the details of the organization’s affairs and provide the day-to-day energy and continuity that is difficult for an all-volunteer board to provide, even in conducting the community, partner, and public outreach that would come naturally to most directors.

Careful budgeting and conservative forecasting can enable decisions that will keep the Board’s options open while

**TYPICAL SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED FOR HERITAGE AREA SUPPORT:**

**Administration**

- One person with an understanding of all aspects of the organization’s role (an executive director is typically responsible to a nonprofit board for such work, but coordination without executive responsibility is also possible given greater chairperson and executive committee involvement);
- Office administration, including support for information technology;
- Contract management;
- Communications, data management (website, e-newsletter, database of contacts, etc., annual report, meeting management);
- Support for meetings of the Board of Directors and committees; and
- Strategic and work planning, budgeting; and
- Public relations.
building toward a future where several full-time staff may become possible. It is assumed that staffing growth will occur gradually from the current level of support, one full-time executive director.

There is a wide range of skills required by a successful heritage area (see sidebars on administration, finance, and program and partner development). These do not necessarily need to be provided by staff. Alternatives – potentially in combination – include delegating to Board committees or individuals or teams of directors, recruiting other volunteers, contracting with consultants, or asking partners to share the load.

Interpretive services in particular could be provided in the form of an interpretive ranger at no or reduced cost by the NPS. This idea has precedent in several heritage areas, including the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Area in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, both currently, and the Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor in eastern Pennsylvania in its early years. Even if a full- or part-time NPS staffer is not made available, the National Park Service can provide staff on temporary detail to focus on various projects where short-term assistance would be helpful.

The functions described in the accompanying sidebars will be fulfilled by arrangements as the Board of Directors decides – it is not possible to predict just how staffing and support should emerge. The projected minimum budget for other heritage areas with plans similar to this one is $300,000 to $400,000 (considering local pay scales and the costs of maintaining staff position beyond salary alone or paying contractors).

Budgeting must cover both staffing and staffing-related operational costs (e.g., travel, office costs) and programmatic costs related and unrelated to staffing (e.g., website or publication costs). A rule of thumb for budgeting for heritage areas is that staff and non-staff each require approximately half of the cash budget. This obviously will vary from year to year according to budget size and program choices, but it provides a starting point for evaluating and proposing annual budgets.

The $300,000 estimate here is considerably less than the budgets of older heritage areas and is not meant to bind the Board of Directors to any particular size of budget. In recent years, it has been suggested that newer heritage areas might expect approximately $300,000 in federal support once their management plans are complete, which must be spent up front before being reimbursed under National Park Service procedures. A $300,000 National Heritage Area grant, it should be mentioned, would require a cash budget of considerably more than $300,000, depending on how much cash is provided in the dollar-for-dollar match required for an NHA match – that is, if the NHA grant is matched completely by cash, the budget would actually be $600,000. The challenge of raising the cash and in-kind match is addressed in a section below.

**ACTION:** Establish a three-year plan for the addition of staffing resources.

**ACTION:** Establish regular personnel and hiring/contracting procedures, including plans for staff training.

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**Typical Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Needed for Heritage Area Support: Finance**

- Financial administration (budgeting, bookkeeping, reports, financial reviews);
- Resource development (fundraising) – planning and execution, including grant writing;
- Supervision of incoming and outgoing grants that support the Board of Directors’ work, including reports to funders;
- Supervision of small grants given by the Board of Directors to heritage area partners; and
- Contract management support.

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The Costilla Crossing Bridge (known locally as the Old Lobatos Bridge) over the Rio Grande, which divides Conejos County (right, looking west) from Costilla County, is listed in the National Register. Completed in 1892, this Thacher through truss bridge is not only the oldest vehicular truss in southern Colorado, but it is also the last unaltered bridge of this design in America.
Typical Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Needed for Heritage Area Support: Programs and Partner Development

A wide range of skills, knowledge, and experience is needed to implement the programs described in the preceding chapters of this plan and delineated in the section above that addresses the need for program committees. To expand upon the list of program committees, here are useful skills, knowledge, and experience:

- Historic Preservation (Chapter 4) and Community Revitalization (Chapter 9): community planning, historic preservation;
- Conservation and Recreation (Chapter 5): conservation, interpretation, trail development;
- Conserving Community Traditions, Education, and Interpretation (Chapters 6 and 7): education for students and adults; public outreach, including use of the arts and events; historical research; interpretation (the ability to take history and historical research and translate it into meaningful learning experiences); and
- Heritage Tourism and Marketing (Chapter 8): tourism, branding, marketing, wayfinding.

Because so many projects to be accomplished through the National Heritage Area are to be led by partners with support from the Board of Directors, interpersonal and organizing skills are also important. Experience in the following could also be useful:

- Training;
- Public outreach;
- Facilitation (of meetings);
- Capital projects; and
- Project planning and management.

Financial Management

The Board of Directors’ financial system will be designed to enable making real-time accounting information readily available to directors and staff, and the generation of financial data for planning, resource development (fundraising), and reports to funders (including the NPS) and the public. Transparency is the general rule for a body such as the Board of Directors; an annual report including financial data is a critical element of the communications plan described below.

The Board’s financial management system is expected to accomplish the following, at a minimum:

- **Track expenses** by a “chart of accounts” – “line items” typical of the profit-and-loss budget statements that are usually reviewed by boards at each of their meetings – in sufficient detail to support annual financial reviews and reporting on the IRS Form 990 (the “tax return” filed by nonprofit organizations with cash budgets over $25,000 per year);

- **Show the actual cost of programs**, by allocating portions of costs tracked in the chart of accounts and aggregating them (e.g., “public outreach” would combine such line items as a website, costs of the required twice-yearly public meetings, transportation costs for a director or staff member to visit a local radio station, etc.); and

- **Enable automated financial reporting** specific to grants given to the organization by multiple sources. Financial software can enable not only tracking of expenses by budgetary line items and programs but the assignment of those expenses (or a portion of them) to any given source, including specific grants. Once such a breakdown exists, it is easier to compile reports to individual funders.

Any board of directors manages its finances first through establishing an annual budget. Over time, the budget becomes based on historical financial data and resource development experience that enable fairly accurate projections of income and expenses. Budget statements and balance sheets are examined regularly, in order to review progress in meeting the budget and managing such obligations as accounts payable and restricted funds, which are recorded in the balance sheet. As the Board’s budget grows, the Board will consider establishing a finance committee tasked with supporting the treasurer in reviewing such reports prior to Board of Directors meetings and being ready to explain
key points. Accounting software that allows an at-a-glance understanding of the budget compared to actual spending is important to use. Sometimes the rate of spending, rather than whether the organization is over or under budget in a certain line, is helpful information to keep programs on target.

Staff costs are not always and exclusively “overhead” costs in the sense of the “management and general” category for expenses reported in IRS Form 990. Rather, staff costs (and expenses relating to support for staffing, such as mileage reimbursements) are to be allocated as appropriate to programs that benefit from staff time. Many important programs can be achieved completely through the work of staff; others, like workshops, require funding for such things as educational materials, in addition to the funds required to cover associated staff costs. If the true costs of programs, including staff, are shown on the Form 990, potential funders examining it will be enabled to understand actual program costs, rather than see an organization top-heavy with staff time that appears to be unrelated to programs.

ACTION: Establish a computerized financial management system that generates sufficient financial data for planning, resource development (fundraising) and administration, and reports to funders and the public.

Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Management Plan
Management & Implementation

ACTION: Establish regular financial procedures to support the Board of Directors’ fiduciary responsibilities, including an annual budget and regular reviews of progress in meeting the budget.

Keeping Records
A corporate handbook generally must be maintained under state statutes applying to corporations (either for-profit or non-profit). State statutes may have simple requirements, but can be exceeded in order to create a full operations manual that records all policies and decisions; holds such documents as Directors’ & Officers’ (“D&O”) liability insurance, annual Form 990’s (the federal tax return for nonprofits), etc.; and describes such other practices as the roles and responsibilities of committees and current members. This is a critical “best practice” for maintaining long-term coherence of Board of Directors policies and decisions. The “handbook” might actually be a series of digital files. A paper copy maintained in a safe location, however, is also desirable for the sake of document integrity and preservation.

ACTION: Establish an operations manual documenting all Board of Directors policies and procedures and compiling key organizational records.

Maintaining Strategic Focus
As this management plan amply demonstrates, a heritage area demands attention to a wide variety of needs and goals. Moreover, for every topic, there will be many ideas seeking the Board of Directors’ attention. The purpose of this plan is to avoid getting off course, by providing a framework for the orderly development of programs that respond to
the legislation, mission, vision, and goals documented in Chapter 1, A Vision for the Heritage Area.

Year to year priority-setting is the responsibility of the Board of Directors. Some organizations develop threearound strategic plans every year, alongside their annual work plans, to keep a realistic sense of priorities and timing in mind. Strategic plans are guided by longer range planning like this management plan, but are selective in their focus, and brief.

Highest priority activities during the first phase of plan implementation (approximately three years) are activities (1) for which no other organizations are directly responsible, (2) that encourage communities and partners to take collective action to support the heritage area and take individual advantage of its benefits; and (3) that grow the capacity of the Board of Directors to address the full span of heritage area programs:

• Improving the visitor experience, by encouraging visitors to enjoy interpretive offerings and recreational opportunities throughout the heritage area, through byway improvements and wayfinding information;

• Creating a program to designate and involve Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Communities, to encourage historic preservation and business development projects that support community revitalization;

• Creating the beginnings of a broad program to support partner development;

• Reaching out to schools and other forms of community engagement;

• Addressing long-term sustainability through resource development planning and execution; and

• Making the heritage area visible to residents, partners, and audiences near and far.

The Board of Directors establishes an annual budget that allows for comparison of actual and estimated income and expenses. A detailed plan for how to spend these resources, in the form of an annual work plan describing annual workload and intended results, is a critical companion to the budget. A work plan compiles descriptions of existing and
Specific Commitments for Implementation

P.L. 111 11, Title VIII,Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(d)(2)(C)(ii) requires that this management plan include “specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the management entity or any government, organization, or individual for the first 5 years of operation.” Accordingly following are commitments made to date (Fall 2012):

Commitments made by the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

- Hire fulltime executive director
- Upgrade the existing website and see to its ongoing operation and maintenance
- Develop and begin implementation of a communications plan
- Develop guidelines for stakeholder and partner assistance
- Develop graphic identity, messaging, and a style guide
- Develop print and video media (possibly a visitor guide or map of the area)
- Work with “Cornerstone Communities” to get action plans in place (and revitalization plans if desired by communities)

Commitments made by the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area with Partners

- Alamosa Masonic Hall (1887): SdCNHA grant disbursed for preservation; matched by the Alamosa Masonic Philanthropic Foundation (Project funded in part by a grant from History Colorado’s State Historical Fund)
- Alamosa Community Gardens: SdCNHA grant disbursed for an horno-building workshop and other gardening educational programming; matched by Alamosa Community Gardens, Inc.
- La Puente/Milagros Coffeehouse (Emperius building, 1908), Alamosa: SdCNHA grant promised; matched by La Puente, homeless prevention non-profit (Project funded in part by a grant from History Colorado’s State Historical Fund)
- Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot (1880), phase 2 restoration: SdCNHA grant promised; matched by Town of Antonito (Project funded in part by a grant from History Colorado’s State Historical Fund)
- Los Caminos Antiguos interpretation project: grant from National Scenic and Historic Byways program made to Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway; SdCNHA and U. S. Forest Service to provide cash match
- San Luis Cultural Center: SdCNHA grant disbursed for phase 1 restoration; matched by Costilla County Economic Development Council, Inc. (Project funded in part by grants from History Colorado’s State Historical Fund, USDA, Costilla County Economic Development and Costilla County)
- Baca Grande – Paleocultural Research Group: SdCNHA grant committed to Baca Mountain Tract survey and test excavation; matched by Paleocultural Research Group
- Alamosa County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (CCVB): SdCNHA grant disbursed for Heritage Area promotional video; matched by Alamosa CCVB

Other commitments made by heritage area partners

- $15,000 committed to the operations of the Board of Directors by Costilla County, FY2011-13
- $22,300 committed to the operations of the Board of Directors by Conejos County, FY2011-13
- $60,000 committed to the operations of the Board of Directors by Alamosa County, FY2011-13
proposed individual projects and programs, including goals, measurable objectives, and individual budget requirements; and assembles these for across-the-board priority-setting. In this way, despite the organization’s diverse day-to-day activities, the Board and staff can maintain a broader perspective in implementing this plan.

**ACTION:** Establish an annual work plan in accord with an annual budget and tied to the annual task agreement required under NPS procedures for annual NHA grants.

**ACTION:** Undertake periodic strategic planning to support annual work planning.

**Cultivating Partnerships**
A defining feature of the responsibilities of any heritage area’s managing entity is an emphasis on partnership. Much of this management plan applies to both the Board of Directors and those organizations and agencies with a stake in the heritage area’s success, working collaboratively. This plan encourages involvement by communities and organizations that wish to participate in the heritage area and provides actions to facilitate ongoing collaboration among partners to promote plans for resource protection, restoration, and construction.

This section is designed to provide useful background and identify actions related to partners and potential supporters that are critical elements of the heritage area’s “partnership system.” Much of the emphasis here, as elsewhere in this plan, is on building relationships and mutual regard among partners in the effort to motivate their extra support, beneficial policies, and collective action. All can contribute a great deal to the heritage area, if they are well-informed and included in relevant deliberations from the outset.

**Partners**
To repeat a point made earlier in this chapter, the Board of Directors is not, in and of itself, the heritage area. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a collective effort, involving organizations and agencies represented on the Board of Directors and others with a stake in the success of the heritage area. Partnerships, informal or formal, are critical to this success.

“Partners” as defined for this management plan are those nonprofit organizations, government agencies, businesses, and such civic groups as organizers of events that celebrate local heritage, all with a direct stake in the success of the heritage area, whether formally acknowledged or not. They may be partners in the sense of having a relationship with the Board of Directors through written agreement to accomplish mutually important tasks – or they may not have a written agreement, yet work with the Board on tasks by mutual consent. Formal partnerships by mutual agreement are needed when the Board of Directors extends National Heritage Area benefits to partners, in order to document roles, responsibilities, and reciprocal benefits.

This plan encourages all partners, but perhaps most especially those with interpretive attractions, to present elements of the heritage area’s interpretive and other offerings individually or through collaboration, to communicate with one another and the Board of Directors, and to embrace the plan wholeheartedly and implement it to the best of their ability. Ideally, they see the plan and Board of Directors as enabling them to accomplish more than they can accomplish individually and they are willing to invest, make policy changes, and otherwise align their existing programs to benefit the entire National Heritage Area.

Relationships with partners are discussed further below in the section on “Partner Development.”

**ACTION:** Facilitate ongoing collaboration among partners to promote plans for resource protection, restoration, construction, interpretation, community revitalization, education, arts programs, and other partner programs that support the long-range goals of this management plan.

**Community Working Groups**
A “community working group” is recommended as a way for communities of all sizes, whether incorporated or not, to organize in order to participate in the National Heritage Area, especially to implement programs described
in Chapter 9, Community Revitalization, and Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation.

Each community is expected to define its role and work out representation and resources individually, with the objectives of fostering effective communications among local organizations and agencies and with the Board of Directors and providing leadership in seeking to qualify their communities for designation as “Cornerstone Community,” “Valley Community,” or “Heritage Community.” Each community and its representative group joins the heritage area by completing a partnership agreement in which they agree to work toward the heritage area’s common mission, vision, and goals.

Community working groups can organize the participation of a wide range of residents and stakeholders including government leaders, business leaders, historians, educators, and others. They should also communicate with the general public and receive public input that can help shape their activities. The results can be varied – from identifying community traditions and ways to sustain them, to telling community stories, to organizing community projects such as a walking tour or entry sign.

The Federal Role in the National Heritage Area

Federal recognition provides credibility and reinforces the long-term importance of the heritage area for partners and communities. It also brings the federal government into direct involvement in the National Heritage Area, through the Secretary of the Interior:

For purposes of carrying out the management plan, the Secretary, acting through the management entity, may use amounts made available under this section to (A) make grants to the State or a political subdivision of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other persons; (B) enter into cooperative agreements with, or provide technical assistance to, the State or a political subdivision of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other interested parties; hire and compensate staff, which shall include individuals with expertise in natural, cultural, and historical resources protection, and heritage programming; (D) obtain money or services from any source including any that are provided under any other Federal law or program; (E) contract for goods or services; and (F) undertake to be a catalyst for any other activity that furthers the Heritage Area and is consistent with the approved management plan. (P.L. 111-11, Sec. 8001(c)(1))

The Secretary has, as with all other National Heritage Areas, delegated responsibilities for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to the National Park Service, where the Intermountain Regional Office is an important guide to National Park Service resources. That office maintains a coordinator to work with heritage areas and provide liaison with the national office. The Intermountain Regional Office, working with both the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and the national office as appropriate, specifically could offer:

- Regular meetings between representatives of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and NPS regional leaders;
- Staff exchanges to help foster mutual understanding of each other’s needs, skills, and opportunities;
- Assistance from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; and
- Collaborative exploration of opportunities to draw on the experience of heritage area participants in addressing challenges that are increasingly important for the NPS, such as making its programs relevant to a 21st century population, connecting with audiences through many levels of education, working successfully through partnerships, achieving meaningful conservation in lived-in landscapes, and developing effective landscape-scale interpretive programs.

The Director of the National Park Service recently issued a “Call to Action” with a series of challenges to the NPS and its many supporters. Exploration with the
Intermountain Regional Office will focus on exactly how the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area could support the “Call to Action.”

In addition, the section above discussing staffing for the Board of Directors suggests the possibility of obtaining interpretive services or other services, through staff on short-term detail or longer term assignment. Such assistance could be invaluable especially in providing more horsepower to the community outreach needed to start up the community designation program.

In the San Luis Valley, much federal land is critical to the experience of the valley’s natural resources and the preservation of the valley’s nationally significant natural features, including water resources and highly valuable natural habitat. As discussed in detail in Chapter 5, these lands are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Reclamation, and the NPS, all of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the U.S. Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In the San Luis Valley, these agencies collaborate as a matter of long-standing informal policy. In addition, a new federal player, staffed by the BLM, is the Rio Grande Natural Area Commission. Again, given the close relationship of the Board of Directors to the NPS, that agency is the critical partner in helping to encourage appropriate collaboration by the Board of Directors with these federal agencies. In particular, the National Heritage Area will seek to help these agencies to address the need for greater interpretation of the valley’s natural resources, encouraging collaboration among not only these agencies and the Board of Directors but also with a variety of organizations, including state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions.

There may be other federal assistance to be sought over time; the Board of Directors will build relationships with federal agencies and their state-local counterparts, including those with economic grants or cost-share programs (USDA, HUD) so that they understand the purpose and progress of the heritage area and can contribute as appropriate.

The three members of the heritage area’s Congressional delegation – the state’s two U.S. Senators and the region’s member of the House of Representatives – routinely send members of their staff to participate in meetings held by the Board of Directors as a part of their ongoing support and interest. They and their staffs can be helpful in identifying sources of federal assistance.

**ACTION:** Request interpretive services from the National Park Service.

**ACTION:** Seek “details” of personnel from the National Park Service to assist with short-term projects.

**ACTION:** Maintain a memorandum of understanding or cooperative agreement with the NPS for assistance with Board of Directors operations.

**ACTION:** Maintain NPS liaison role (as provided during management planning).

**ACTION:** Address the need for greater interpretation of the Valley’s natural and cultural resources, encouraging collaboration among not only federal land-managing agencies and the Board of Directors but also with a variety of organizations, including state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions.

Pike’s Stockade, a state historical site owned by History Colorado and managed from Fort Garland Museum. The State of Colorado is a highly important partner for the National Heritage Area.
ACTION: Build relationships with agencies at the federal level whose work affects the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area or which can provide services and funding.

ACTION: Provide routine briefings to members of the Colorado Congressional delegation.

**Tribal Role**
The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is fortunate in that for federal agencies with lands in the San Luis Valley, there is a long-time practice of periodic consultation with Indian nations, meetings that are hosted by the federal agencies and which cover a range of issues of mutual concern. The National Heritage Area will participate in these consultations as appropriate, working with the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service.

ACTION: Engage with tribal nations and consult on projects of mutual benefit.

**Role of the State of Colorado**
The Governor can be helpful in expressing support for state agencies’ actions to develop and maintain the heritage area, and may be amenable to coordinating agencies’ contributions. For this reason, the Governor’s office will receive routine briefings on the heritage area’s progress. In addition, State legislators can also help to influence state agencies’ support; they will also receive the courtesy of routine briefings.

ACTION: Provide routine briefings to the Governor and seek help with coordination of state agencies’ contributions to implementation of the management plan.

ACTION: Provide routine briefings to elected officials representing heritage area jurisdictions in the state legislature.

ACTION: Build relationships with agencies at the state level whose work affects the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area or which can provide services and funding.

**Role of Local Governments**
The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s three counties provide considerable leadership through representation on the Board of Directors and providing funding to support National Heritage Area programs and operations. Alamosa, Antonito, San Luis and Fort Garland are the four communities expected to become Cornerstone Communities. All four will be offered coordinated outreach designed to move them to full Cornerstone status as soon as possible.

ACTION: Provide routine briefings to local government officials and involve them in the National Heritage Area’s community designation program.

**Partnerships with Educational Institutions**
As described in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition, outreach to educational institutions, both pre-K-12 and institutions of higher learning, is critical.

ACTION: Build relationships with various groups related to public schools (districts, superintendents, teachers, parent-teacher groups, students and student groups, and other service organizations involved in the schools).
ACTION: Build relationships with institutions of higher learning in or serving the National Heritage Area that can provide services and funding, such as Adams State University or Trinidad State Junior College.

PARTNER DEVELOPMENT

A section below notes that “fundraising” is now often called “resource development” because successful fundraising proceeds from developing relationships with sources (resources) for those funds. In the same sense, “partnering” should be regarded as developing relationships, for the benefit of both parties. Thus, the title of this section addressing how to shape heritage area programs for partners is “partner development.”

Every action the Board of Directors, staff, and partners undertake on behalf of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is an opportunity for enhancing partners’ abilities to contribute to the heritage area. (Just as every action is also an opportunity for communicating heritage area messages, and for developing relationships that will support successful fundraising, both points made in sections below.)

The National Heritage Area has great potential for assisting and lending credibility to the goals and endeavors of individual partners. Moreover, emphasizing working relationships among partners is an important means of accomplishing the heritage area’s goals in a mutually beneficial way.

The idea of partner development goes far beyond the usual hope of heritage areas’ partners for grants. The Board of Directors’ intent is to share some of its federal funding with partners in the form of matching grants awarded on a competitive basis. Monetary matching grants are only one way to build partners’ capacity. Yes, grants can be a part of partner development, depending on the extent to which the Board of Directors decides grants can further the goals of this management plan. The board might also decide to spend funds on other programs in order to implement this plan through partners. Ideas for partner development include:

- Technical assistance for program and product development;
- Technical assistance for fundraising and grant writing (especially but not limited to writing grant applications for heritage area funding);
- Networking/gatherings;
- Training programs and workshops;
- Quality assurance programs that let partners promote their achievements;
- Best practices/technology transfer/skill-sharing/clearinghouse;
- Recognition programs (“best of,” “most improved,” etc.);
- Endorsement of partners’ grants to others;
- Docent and volunteer recruitment and training;
- Marketing for partners’ programs;
- Awards of matching grants on a competitive basis; and
- Awards of consulting assistance paid for by the Board of Directors (rather than dollars paid directly to the awardee), on a competitive basis with a match made by the awardee.

Design of a grant program for the first phase of plan implementation is a high-priority activity that requires consideration of matching requirements, size limitations, and a focus on activities that maximize a given emphasis in implementing management plan goals, year to year. Allocation of funds to such grants will depend on the Board of Directors’ sense of how much of its budget it will devote to initiating its own programs versus supporting those of partners, and what programs within partner development are most useful to emphasize. The Board of Directors may choose in some years to devote its grant funding to one or more specific projects of highest priority for implementing the plan.

ACTION: Establish a partnership assistance program that recognizes the many ways that the National Heritage Area can support the growth and development of partners’ capacity and programs.

ACTION: Reserve a portion of annual federal heritage area funding for small monetary grants that will build partners’ capacity. Develop and implement a process and annual schedule for the identification and selection of partner projects.
to receive support in the form of grants or other heritage area benefits that should be documented as part of the heritage area’s record to be evaluated in relation to Congressional requirements.

**Achieving Visibility through Good Communications**

Every program or action undertaken by the Board of Directors is related to communications in some way. Branding – discussed in Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism and Marketing – is important because it defines the National Heritage Area and sets expectations in the minds of all audiences, including both visitors and residents. Planning for communications is broader, however, encompassing the range of ways the Board of Directors will communicate with partners, supporters, and residents as well as visitors and potential visitors. In addition to heritage tourism marketing, communications planning must include interpretive activities described in Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation; and community outreach programs described in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition, and Chapter 9, Community Revitalization.

The Board of Directors’ role in communications is:

- To build the heritage area’s identity and visibility among multiple audiences, both residents and visitors;
- To enable communication with and networking among partners;
- To use technological advances in the digital realm, particularly to serve visitors and those planning to visit; and
- To enable long-term success in developing funding relationships and resources, as discussed in the following section.

A brief plan for the Board of Directors’ communications will be a part of every annual work plan (described above). Such a plan includes:

- Communications opportunities in the coming year – both internal to the Board of Directors’ programs (e.g., training workshops) and external (e.g., networking at partners’ events, community festivals);
- Objectives or desired results – what an audience will do if a chosen means of communication is successful;
- Messages and audiences, following from primary messaging strategies developed for the branding program; and

A Checklist of Potential Communications Activities

Many ideas are available in books or on the web advising nonprofit organizations on “getting the word out.” A few potential activities are:

- Annual report
- Materials to support the resource development plan (discussed below)
- Website
- Email newsletter and other email communications
- Social media and evolving digital technologies
- Printed materials
- Promotions (e.g., advertising, exhibits for display at meetings, special banners)
- Participation in community events (e.g., a director’s speaking engagement or a booth at a festival)
- Marketing for events sponsored by the Board of Directors (e.g., getting the word out about a workshop, printing invitations for a fundraiser)
- Courting media coverage

Participants in public meetings were direct and clear in their talks with the Board of Directors and consultant team as they considered potential ideas and emphasis for the management plan.
Media outreach is an important part of communications planning. Print, television, radio, and digital reporters and editors are not an audience per se, but rather a means of reaching audiences. As described in Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism & Marketing, are many possibilities for such outreach, in person or via messages – such as media releases, editorial board meetings, familiarization tours, press conferences for especially important moments, invitations to cover events, special previews, and more.

An important twice-yearly opportunity for the Board of Directors to communicate with partners, public officials, the media, and other local audiences is the federally legislated requirement that, as the National Heritage Area’s management entity, the Board hold public meetings to review progress on the management plan and upcoming activities. Each event is regarded as a premier opportunity to communicate the purpose and vision for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. One meeting each year could be a formal annual meeting (generally a requirement to maintain state-sanctioned corporate status, not to be confused with nonprofit status); another could be an awards program to recognize partners’ accomplishments over the previous year. Programs could include not only reports from the Board of Directors or its committees, but also provide an opportunity for partners to report to the Board of Directors on their individual progress in contributing to the heritage area’s development.

ACTION: Create a communications plan within the annual work plan, coordinating with communications associated with interpretation, heritage tourism marketing, and resource development.

ACTION: Hold regular gatherings of partners to review progress on the management plan, at least twice yearly to fulfill requirements of the National Heritage Area legislation.

ACTION: Create an awards program to recognize partner achievements.
Successful fundraising relies on development of close and lasting relationships with funders and donors, existing and potential. This emphasis on developing relationships is the reason why the preferred term for fundraising in recent years has become “resource development.”

Grant writing – what many outsiders to the nonprofit world believe to be the way funds are raised – is but one part of a much wider range of activities to cultivate the resources that will sustain a nonprofit organization. Even the most successful grant writing program, in fact, begins with a good understanding of grantors’ wishes and programs, often built from personal contact and familiarity built strategically, over time.

A solid development plan is integral to both strategic planning and annual work plans. The short-term planning documented in annual work plans guides the daily work of resource development, step by step. Integrating longer term planning with overall organizational plans can help to set priorities and suggest ways to design programs to optimize the likelihood of raising needed resources. The long-term plan is a more general guide, setting objectives against which longer term achievement can be measured. This section of the heritage area management plan suggests objectives and strategies specifically associated with developing relationships for ongoing support, for incorporation into a resource development plan.

A successful organization with strong, visible programs, a good reputation, and clear results is attractive to supporters and donors. The most important factors in successful resource development, however, are focus and determination. Every day, someone associated with the Board of Directors must ask, “What will it take for the heritage area to be a flourishing initiative 10 years from now, and what must we do today to make that happen?” A plan simply organizes and documents all the ideas that can answer that question.

The Challenge of Matching the National Heritage Area’s Annual Federal Funding

Federal funds allocated to the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area must be matched dollar for dollar (“1:1”) with nonfederal funds. There are three ways to accomplish this match.

Cash Match Spent Directly by Partners

If partners receive federal funds via the Board of Directors, they can be expected to provide a portion of the required match, perhaps much more than the 1:1 minimum (called “overmatch”). Already, in several early actions taken during the management planning process, grantees in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area have received small grants that have enabled high-value projects to proceed – illustrating the idea of “leverage,” in which a small grant amount is the “lever” that makes a much larger budget possible. The overmatch can be counted toward

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**A Checklist for Ways to Raise Funds**

- Grant applications and requests for funding (or sponsorship) to
  - Foundations;
  - Government agencies;
  - Corporations and businesses;
- Mid-year solicitation for an “annual fund” (unrestricted dollars to support the organization in general);
- An annual campaign for “end-of-year gifts” (also generally understood by donors to be unrestricted);
- A program to solicit major donors;
- A campaign for a specific need, project, or program (restricted funding);
- Events and other “grassroots” fundraising opportunities at the community level – sometimes called “friend-raising” since such programs are better budgeted for raising enough funding to cover their costs, rather than as a significant source of cash;
- Endowment and capital campaigns – to build long-range resources;
- Cooperative fundraising activities with partners;
- Fee-for-service activities (charging for technical assistance to partners; or hiring out staff experts beyond the heritage area); and
- Enterprise activities (such as web sales of merchandise related to the heritage area).
the 1:1 obligation, thus supporting activities that may not so readily find support (typically such overhead items as copying, equipment maintenance, or software). While these are real dollars applied to the federally required match, they are not dollars that count toward the budget for the Board of Directors’ operations and programs – sometimes called “pass-through match.”

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s intended leverage through partners’ overmatch is expected to be considerably larger than the minimum. For example, the projected match in the FY11 Task Agreement with the National Park Service (a task agreement documents the conditions by which NPS will convey the federal allocation to a National Heritage Area), calls for an in-kind match of $548,191 ($580,191 total minus $32,000 cash match), leveraged by just $149,000 in federal National Heritage Area funds. Maintaining this track record over time will require careful programming, planning with partners, management of prospects, and tracking of projects’ progress (since the partners must actually spend their dollars before they can be counted as match). The Board of Directors must insure that sufficient projects are “in the pipeline” to be available as the need arises with each task agreement and with each reimbursement request to NPS based on those task agreements.

Cash Match from Non-federal Contributors
The funding available from federal heritage area allocations will never be enough to accomplish the work laid out in this management plan. It is best regarded as seed funding. Such funding makes the Board of Directors a desirable funding partner, however, because the game of leverage works both ways: those considering a contribution will see that their funds can leverage the federal funds, which are available for a project if a nonfederal match is granted. These are dollars available for operations and programs above and beyond federal heritage area support, and they are critical to long-term sustainability, with or without the continuation of the federal funding after the 15 years prescribed in the legislation establishing the National Heritage Area. Contributions made by Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla counties in recent years have been made because local elected leaders have recognized that local public dollars would leverage the federal dollars, to the benefit of the region.

“In-kind” Contributions
The National Heritage Area’s match to its federal allocation is allowed to include the fair value of contributed goods or services, including volunteers’ time, donated professional services, donated mileage, and donated materials. While these contributions may make many projects possible thanks to the kindness of individuals and businesses, and may therefore reduce program and staff costs, they do not provide dollars for operations and programs that are reflected in an annual budget. That said, such contributions can provide a significant matching value. The value for volunteers’ time is generally based on a state-by-state survey maintained by Independent Sector at http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time; Coloradoans’ contribution of time is valued at $22.03, slightly more than the national average of $21.79 (2011 figures). The IRS provides an annual figure for the value of donated mileage, since volunteers may deduct that value as a charitable contribution on their federal tax

The Antonito Depot, built in 1880 by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad and now owned by the Town of Antonito, has received early-action grant funding from the National Heritage Area’s Board of Directors, matching a State Historical Fund grant for its restoration. Visitors can see a rare transition from standard-gauge to narrow-gauge rail at this location, as a narrower rail bed accommodated the winding routes needed through the mountains to the south and west. Listed on the State Register of Historic Properties, the depot is significant for its native stone masonry and its role in the growth of Antonito as an important terminal for freight, passenger, and package services. For more than 60 years, the depot was the junction point for the “Chili Line” to Santa Fe, New Mexico and the railroad’s San Juan Extension connecting Alamosa to Durango and Silverton.
return; the 2011 charitable standard mileage rate was 14 cents per mile.

With regard to the in-kind services described in this last point, beyond their immediate support for projects and programs, however, volunteers have an additional value: they can become friends who are particularly knowledgeable about the National Heritage Area – its partners, programs, and needs – and who can provide effective help to the Board of Directors in raising funds. That is, if they are asked – an example of developing relationships.

Table 10-1 documents an analysis of potential sources of nonfederal governmental funding to be pursued, as the beginning for a long-range resource development plan. It was developed as part of an overall look at a potential budget that calls for total cash revenues of more than $200,000 in 2012 to increase by 85 percent to just under $400,000 in 2016. Local and state government grants plus non-National Heritage Area federal grants would be additional sources of cash support for the program (other kinds of federal grants, of course, would not be allowed as matching funds for the National Heritage Area allocation, but would be helpful all the same).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Funding Option</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-federal governmental grants</td>
<td>• Granting agencies can be informed that federal funds for National Heritage Areas are available that can potentially double the impact of any grant-funded project, whether or not the source requires a match</td>
<td>• Uncertain year to year • Rarely cover administration/overhead – typically 95+% dedicated to project(s) • Requires sustained, active pursuit by staff</td>
<td>• Colorado’s State Historical Fund • GOCO (Great Outdoors Colorado) grants • Scenic and Historic Byways program (CDOT) • Colorado Creative Industries (Colorado Office of Economic Development – a merger of the former Council on the Arts, Office of Film, Television and Media, and Art in Public Places program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-governmental grants (foundations; corporate foundations)</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
<td>• Same as above</td>
<td>• Anschutz Family Foundation • Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc. • Bonfils-Stanton Foundation • El Pomar Foundation • Gates Family Foundation • National Trust for Historic Preservation’s grants devoted to Colorado • A full listing with deadlines can be found at <a href="http://www.coloradogrants.org/resources/deadline-calendar.php">http://www.coloradogrants.org/resources/deadline-calendar.php</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorships (corporations and businesses)</td>
<td>• Same as above • Can support “naming” opportunities (buildings, events, programs)</td>
<td>• Requires staff time and energy to educate businesses and solicit sponsorships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>• Voluntary • Visitor-based businesses that will benefit can contribute • San Luis Valley organizations that benefit could solicit/collaborate from their patrons • Can be tax deductible for the donor (Board of Directors is a qualified charity under IRS rules) • Typically unrestricted funding that allows the organization to determine the best use</td>
<td>• Requires staff time and energy to educate and solicit contributions from businesses and individuals • Partners may not be comfortable soliciting their patrons • Potential for proceeds uncertain</td>
<td>• Individual donations (“memberships”) gathered through web and newsletter solicitations • Annual appeal • Appeal for donations related to a specific project</td>
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<td>Collaborations (e.g., Los Caminos Antiguos, Alamosa Marketing Board)</td>
<td>• Coordinate &amp; advance shared goals • Existing funding streams could be matched for a win-win to both parties</td>
<td>• Limited to activities with shared vision, approach, etc. • Requires high levels of trust and relinquishing of autonomy</td>
<td>• Successful grant application for Colorado scenic byway funding in summer 2012, a collaboration among the Board of Directors, Los Caminos Antiguos, and the U.S. Forest Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants to partners</td>
<td>• Coordinate &amp; advance shared goals • Partners are responsible for raising the required National Heritage Area match</td>
<td>• Reliance on partners’ funding streams (both amounts and timing), which may not match timing requirements of National Heritage Area grant</td>
<td>• Grants already made by the Board of Directors, including (but not limited to): • Alamosa Masonic Hall • San Luis Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center • Antonito Train Station</td>
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<td>Existing Lodging Tax</td>
<td>• Existing structure/revenues of 19% in all three counties • Pooling may increase effectiveness</td>
<td>• Limited revenue potential • Existing uses could change • Does not fund Board of Directors overhead beyond the potential for supporting visitor attraction marketing</td>
<td>• Conejos County’s murals tour (brochure)</td>
</tr>
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<td>New &amp; Existing Marketing Tax</td>
<td>• Costilla and Conejos do not currently have one • Pooling and targeting through Board of Directors may increase effectiveness</td>
<td>• Requires a ballot measure • Widely different revenue generation potential across counties • Alamosa already has 4% marketing tax and a well-established board and staff to direct its use • Does not fund overhead beyond marketing</td>
<td>• Alamosa County Local Marketing District</td>
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Table 10.2 Potential Project Funding Options.
Table 10-2 Potential Project Funding Options (continued)

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<th>Funding Option</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-County Metro District (a uniform multi-county property tax)</td>
<td>• Mil levy used to pay for specific improvements</td>
<td>• Requires a vote of all those who will pay into district</td>
<td>• Denver’s Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), <a href="http://www.scfd.org/">http://www.scfd.org/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Districts: Business Improvement District (BID); General Improvement District (GID); Downtown Development Authority (DDA); Urban Renewal Authority (URA)</td>
<td>• Any variety of special district could be used to fund capital improvements and associated improvements</td>
<td>• Generally difficult to form</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reliable, multi-year funding</td>
<td>• TABOR (CO Taxpayers’ Bill of Rights) requires a vote to pass any additional tax</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can be based on tax and/or fees</td>
<td>• Tax increase</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can issue bonds</td>
<td>• Generally used in municipalities, not counties (Note: may therefore be an option for municipalities implementing Community Revitalization Plans)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Could apply to projects, maintenance, or raise local match for federal funding</td>
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<td>• Colorado special districts are flexible and can be tailored for a specific use, program or improvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Can create organizational and financial structure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Could be used as local matching funds</td>
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Organizing for Resource Development

Financial planning has provided background information for the Board of Directors regarding the potential scope, cash flow, and expenditures involved in implementing this management plan. Good financial information, forecasting, and budgeting will always be critical to effective resource development — without knowing what dollars and other resources the organization needs, it is difficult to understand the possibilities for raising funds and other resources and to make good choices.

Organizing for resource development is equally critical. It starts with a determination to involve everyone with a stake in the success of the National Heritage Area, and to build their enthusiasm for the effort. The Board of Directors and staff must be ready to pitch in where needed and constantly on the lookout for opportunities. All residents and potential community partners in the three counties should see raising funds as part of their role in the heritage area. Fundraising must be a team effort that engages everyone involved in the organization’s endeavors:

• The chairman of the Board of Directors, in tandem with the Executive Committee;

• A Resource Development Committee (if established -- see committee discussion earlier in this chapter);

• A fully engaged Board of Directors, with time on its agendas to address resource development, a willingness to learn about the resource development process, and the ability to participate in calls on potential grantors and donors;

• A staff director (executive director);

• A resource development specialist (under contract or on staff);

• A communications staff or contractor fully on board with the idea of combining communications with resource development; and

• An administrative staff to support administration of incoming grants and reporting to grantors.

Heritage area partners should be encouraged to understand the Board of Directors’ needs in meeting the responsibility to raise support for the entire heritage area, and to regard that challenge as their own, as partners with a stake in the heritage area’s success.

A basic ingredient in organizing for resource development is a plan. This plan is a record of decisions and direction based on research done to learn about possible sources, analysis of strategies for seeking funds, and establishment of objectives. The resource development plan ideally would cover a three-year timeline, to be reviewed and updated annually. It provides guidance for the resource development activities to be detailed in the Board of Directors’ annual work plan, as described earlier.
An experienced fundraising professional can advise the Board of Directors in creating this plan, and can assist in carrying it out if planning reveals the desirability of such added horsepower. There are also many good how-to resources available through websites and books.

**ACTION:** Develop a resource development plan and an accompanying short-range plan that can be coordinated with the annual work plan. Make each plan as specific as possible, with financial targets by category of source (see Table 10-2 for categories) and other measurable objectives; update each on a regular basis to maintain a time horizon beyond the annual work plan of at least three years. [NOTE: The following actions are logical and expected elements of resource development planning and action.]

**ACTION:** Coordinate all resource development activities with the annual work plan, especially the communications plan, in order to integrate resource development into all aspects of programs and operations.

**ACTION:** Undertake an evaluation of current representation on the Board of Directors and develop plans for expanding diversity and skill sets to support management plan implementation and resource development.

**ACTION:** Develop a “case statement” that makes the arguments in general that are likely to appeal to donors. This brief document provides a basis for a message and an appeal that are to be tailored to the needs of each prospect.

**ACTION:** Continuously research prospects and match them with directors, staff, and friends; vice versa, identify prospects through existing relationships assessed by directors, staff, and friends for potential support.

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**Evaluation Requirement in P.L. 111-11**

P.L. 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(g) tasks the Board of Directors with evaluation that will require ongoing record-keeping:

1. **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 3 years before the date on which authority for Federal funding terminates for the Heritage Area [2009+15-3=2021], the Secretary shall—
   - (A) conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of the Heritage Area; and
   - (B) prepare a report in accordance with paragraph (3).

2. **EVALUATION.**—An evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A) shall—
   - (A) assess the progress of the management entity with respect to—
     - (i) accomplishing the purposes of this section [Sec. 8001 in general; purposes, however, are not specifically stated] for the Heritage Area; and
     - (ii) achieving the goals and objectives of the approved management plan for the Heritage Area;
   - (B) analyze the Federal, State, local, and private investments in the Heritage Area to determine the leverage and impact of the investments; and
   - (C) review the management structure, partnership relationships, and funding of the Heritage Area for purposes of identifying the critical components for sustainability of the Heritage Area.

3. **REPORT.**—
   - (A) **IN GENERAL.**—Based on the evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall prepare a report that includes recommendations for the future role of the National Park Service, if any, with respect to the Heritage Area.
   - (B) **REQUIRED ANALYSIS.**—If the report prepared under subparagraph (A) recommends that Federal funding for the Heritage Area be reauthorized, the report shall include an analysis of—
     - (i) ways in which Federal funding for the Heritage Area may be reduced or eliminated; and
     - (ii) the appropriate time period necessary to achieve the recommended reduction or elimination.

In addition, under Sec. 8001(c)(2)(e), the Board of Directors must submit annual information, a critical task in its own right and one that will also support the longer term evaluation requirement:

- (i) submit an annual report to the Secretary that describes the activities, expenses, and income of the management entity (including grants to any other entities during the year that the report is made).
ACTION: Continue to build and nurture relationships with local, state, and federal officials and their staff.

ACTION: Build and nurture relationships with local and state businesses whose interests intersect with those of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its programs.

ACTION: Build and nurture relationships with local and state foundations whose interests intersect with those of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its programs. Consider informal or formal working groups with non-board advisors for long-term cooperation on building such relationships, as appropriate.

ACTION: Make resource development a regular part of the Board of Directors’ agenda, with a generous amount of time devoted to this topic.

ACTION: Develop a donor database and begin gathering information about prospects, using a software system designed to support long-term growth of the database for the purpose of fundraising.

ACTION: Include volunteers in the donor database. Thank contributors of in-kind services and donated materials in the National Heritage Area as diligently as those who donate cash.

Evaluating Progress

One of the major roles of the Board of Directors is to track (and celebrate) progress toward the vision for the National Heritage Area. It must monitor and evaluate implementation of the plan that is designed to help the region achieve that vision and organize adjustments as circumstances and opportunities change.

There are two levels of such evaluation: (1) annual evaluation, to be undertaken by the Board of Directors (and staff), and (2) a one-time-only, long-term, independent evaluation undertaken by the National Park Service, which is required by the legislation establishing the National Heritage Area (see sidebar). Let’s look at each.

Annual Evaluation

Evaluation is an ongoing responsibility for the Board of Directors. Measuring and evaluating performance will guide communications, resource development, strategic planning, annual work plans, and budgeting, as well as the programs described in Chapters 4-9. As described above in the section on work planning, each activity as it is designed and put into operation will include measurable objectives. Careful documentation of a program and its intended and actual results permits an evaluation as to the success of the program, and supports annual reporting to partners, supporters, and residents.

There are also some measures worth tracking that can indicate overall progress year to year. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area already supplies annual measures to the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, which has collected such data for many years. The Board of Directors will incorporate these well-established measures into regular collection of data for documenting the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s performance.

Understanding spending patterns is a part of tracking a heritage area’s overall progress, requiring information that is easy to collect. A typical measure is how many dollars are invested directly by the National Heritage Area versus local investment dollars leveraged, project by project and overall. There are also intangibles that are important to understand as well, such as level of cooperation among partners and visitor satisfaction. It is helpful to understand up front what information will be needed for evaluation, and how it will be collected. For example, level of cooperation among partners might be indicated by the number of partners collaborating on a project, and how many such projects are accomplished or exist in a given year.
Measurement is a simple matter of counting projects and keeping track of those involved. Visitor satisfaction – or the satisfaction of partners participating in a workshop, as another example – might be measured through a survey taken from time to time. Designing such surveys may be rather simple – as in understanding how well a workshop was received – or they may be more involved. Visitor research (discussed in Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism & Marketing), especially to achieve consistency and usefulness over multiple years, is among the more complicated kinds of information needed to measure and evaluate performance.

Federal Evaluation
Well-documented, thorough evaluation done on an annual basis will support a long-term evaluation expected by 2021, when the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area will undergo independent evaluation by the National Park Service (see sidebar for specific information required by the legislation establishing the heritage area). Current thinking on the part of the national program offers these questions as the basis for the evaluation:

- Based on its authorizing legislation and general management plan, has the heritage area achieved its proposed accomplishments?
- What have been the impacts of investments made by federal, state, tribal, and local government and private entities?
- How do the heritage area’s management structure, partnership relationships, and current funding contribute to its sustainability?

The evaluation design employed in the first, experimental reviews for older heritage areas has also included these topics:

- Overarching goals for the National Heritage Area;
- Resources and key partnerships available to help the National Heritage Area accomplish its goals;
- Activities and strategies that are being implemented to accomplish the goals;
- Intended short and long term outcomes; and
- The linkages among the activities, strategies, and outcomes.

ACTION: Establish measurable objectives at the time each program is designed and inaugurated, for annual documentation and review.

ACTION: Maintain excellent record-keeping to support annual and long-term evaluation.

ACTION: Conduct annual or periodic evaluations of the work and the efforts of partners in achieving the vision for the National Heritage Area.
ACTION: Reserve at least one round of committee and board meetings each year to evaluate progress on the management plan and the Board’s involvement, with particular focus on communications and resource development.

CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTATION

This concludes the long-range management plan for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area over its first 10 to 15 years. This plan addresses a unique place where the natural resources are well-recognized, so much so that the San Luis Valley as a whole is among the most protected landscapes in North America, including much privately held land. It has taken many years and many actors (and many dollars) to preserve and protect the Valley’s natural beauty and resources.

The preservation of the communities and human culture that are intertwined with this natural region is an even tougher proposition. Though land managers can never rest in the task of protecting ever-changing natural resources, at least they own the resources outright, or have willing landowners working with them side by side. When it comes

Priorities for the First Phase of Implementation

- Encouraging communities to undertake historic preservation and community revitalization planning and projects that will save important historic resources and provide the economic impetus for community improvements.
- Undertaking a wide variety of heritage area-wide interpretive initiatives to achieve greater visibility and enhanced interpretive presentations for residents and visitors. These initiatives will focus on interpreting communities and the natural landscape. Community interpretation through oral history is a possibility (and described in Chapter 6), but not an early focus given the large number of high-priority activities identified in the plan.
- Connecting local culture and interpretive attractions with the local school system (seven districts), to ensure that the next generation is prepared to become stewards of the magnificent legacy of the National Heritage Area.
- Emphasizing interpretation of the natural landscape, to include enhancing and expanding (1) public access to that landscape on public lands and through community-based recreational initiatives, and (2) available information about recreational opportunities on public lands. The heritage area’s focus, however, is on interpretive presentation and visitor information.
- Ensuring that the visitor is warmly welcomed and has a great experience, whether encountering businesses, attractions, public services, event participants, or simply someone on the street or at a shop.
- Marketing the heritage area in parallel to development of interpretive presentation, focusing first on residents and audiences at existing attractions and events, then on nearby “drive markets,” and later seeking a wider audience through national and international recognition. Many interpretive activities are considered to be partly marketing in nature, such as the heritage area’s website.
- Seeking visibility. Achieving wider recognition of the national importance of the unique heritage of the southern San Luis Valley must be a focus of all of the heritage area’s communications, whether with residents or visitors, through marketing and interpretation, or through simple, standard ways of reaching out to the public. While marketing may be designed to increase the number of visitors to the San Luis Valley, this point is a wider one, that the National Heritage Area should be understood by one and all to be a special place worthy of exploration and stewardship.
- Creating a Partner Development Program that acknowledges that many of the activities that the National Heritage Area can and will undertake will build the capabilities of stakeholders who can help to implement this plan, and ensuring (1) that this approach is deliberately reinforced as program are designed that achieve one or more strategic objectives, and (2) that partners understand this relationship and its multiple benefits. Grants should be understood to be a part of this program, but not the only part. Partners are stakeholders in the San Luis Valley with the ability to influence the implementation of the plan, and include local governments, community groups, interpretive attractions (local, state, and federal), and many specialized organizations supporting the arts, education, history, recreation, and conservation.
- Building relationships with a wide variety of actors that can assist in the implementation of this plan. Specifically mentioned here are local governments, local economic development agencies, organizations and agencies supporting historic preservation, educational institutions, and elected officials.
To culture and history, however, the task is to align humans and communities, businesses and governments in a common, focused effort to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

To accomplish this task, this plan must address many needs, identified by the Board of Directors and participants in the planning process and listed here in the order in which they are addressed in this plan:

- Preserving historic resources;
- Conserving natural resources and the cultural landscape;
- Improving recreation opportunities;
- Conserving the shared sense of identity and community and traditions unique to this special place;
- Telling the stories of human history and natural heritage, also unique to this special place;
- Educating the next generation about this legacy;
- Improving the visitor experience and sharing opportunities to experience this National Heritage Area with both residents and a wider audience beyond the San Luis Valley;
- Revitalizing communities through heritage tourism, interpretation, and historic preservation; and
- Managing the heritage area sustainably, for long-term success.

The needs of the unique resources and unique communities of the southern San Luis Valley have shaped a plan that addresses the challenges of this particular National Heritage Area. Priorities for implementation are another matter. The stakeholders of a National Heritage Area, as the preceding list amply illustrates, must juggle a host of programs. These address competing issues in the hard work of bringing to life the vision of preserving and celebrating this special place.

As a long-range plan, this management plan documents a vision and goals plus issues and resources, identifies strategic objectives, provides guidance, and lists actions that can help to bring about positive results. The hard choices about how to combine and spend limited resources – time, public attention, and volunteer energies as well as funds – are ahead.

Two tools to assist in making the short-range and day-to-day decisions that this National Heritage Area will need are appended to this management plan. Appendix H offers draft guidance for a first-phase work program with short-range objectives based on the strategic objectives and actions of the management plan, estimated to take at least three years. The focus of proposed programs is described in the final sidebar of this plan. Appendix I assembles all strategic objectives in this plan together with the recommended actions, providing a long-term checklist for tracking progress.

The success of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area will be measured in many ways. Foremost among these will be seeing that the unique cultural heritage of this region not only survives, but thrives as generations succeed those that participated in this plan. That heritage is deeply rooted in the physical space and natural resources of the San Luis Valley. Here, and nowhere else, survives a multicultural heritage dominated by Hispano traits, but utterly its own. That such a place has survived into the 21st century is remarkable. Now, the task is to make this National Heritage Area, for generations to come, a central part of its story.


Colorado State University. Colorado Natural Heritage Program Potential Conservation Areas Reports. Specific conservation areas referenced in the text of this plan may be found online in alphabetical order (or via map links) at: http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/gis/pca_reports.asp#s


APPENDIX A: Public Law 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
TITLE VIII—NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

Subtitle A—Designation of National Heritage Areas

SEC. 8001. SANGRE DE CRISTO NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA, COLORADO.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) HERITAGE AREA.—The term “Heritage Area” means the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area established by subsection (b)(1).

(2) MANAGEMENT ENTITY.—The term “management entity” means the management entity for the Heritage Area designated by subsection (b)(4).

(3) MANAGEMENT PLAN.—The term “management plan” means the management plan for the Heritage Area required under subsection (d).

(4) MAP.—The term “map” means the map entitled “Proposed Sangre De Cristo National Heritage Area” and dated November 2005.

(5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the Interior.

(6) STATE.—The term “State” means the State of Colorado.

(b) SANGRE DE CRISTO NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the State the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

(2) BOUNDARIES.—The Heritage Area shall consist of—

(A) the counties of Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla; and

(B) the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, the Baca National Wildlife Refuge, the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, and other areas included in the map.

(3) MAP.—A map of the Heritage Area shall be—

(A) included in the management plan; and

(B) on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.

(4) MANAGEMENT ENTITY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The management entity for the Heritage Area shall be the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors.

(B) MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS.—Members of the Board shall include representatives from a broad cross-section of the individuals, agencies, organizations, and governments that were involved in the planning and development of the Heritage Area before the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) AUTHORITIES.—For purposes of carrying out the management plan, the Secretary, acting through the management entity, may use amounts made available under this section to—

(A) make grants to the State or a political subdivision of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other persons;

(B) enter into cooperative agreements with, or provide technical assistance to, the State or a political subdivision
of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other interested parties;

(C) hire and compensate staff, which shall include individuals with expertise in natural, cultural, and historical resources protection, and heritage programming;

(D) obtain money or services from any source including any that are provided under any other Federal law or program;

(E) contract for goods or services; and

(F) undertake to be a catalyst for any other activity that furthers the Heritage Area and is consistent with the approved management plan.

(2) DUTIES.—The management entity shall—

(A) in accordance with subsection (d), prepare and submit a management plan for the Heritage Area to the Secretary;

(B) assist units of local government, regional planning organizations, and nonprofit organizations in carrying out the approved management plan by—

(i) carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values in the Heritage Area;

(ii) establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs in the Heritage Area;

(iii) developing recreational and educational opportunities in the Heritage Area;

(iv) increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources of the Heritage Area;

(v) protecting and restoring historic sites and buildings in the Heritage Area that are consistent with Heritage Area themes;

(vi) ensuring that clear, consistent, and appropriate signs identifying points of public access, and sites of interest are posted throughout the Heritage Area; and

(vii) promoting a wide range of partnerships among governments, organizations, and individuals to further the Heritage Area;

(C) consider the interests of diverse units of government, businesses, organizations, and individuals in the Heritage Area in the preparation and implementation of the management plan;

(D) conduct meetings open to the public at least semi-annually regarding the development and implementation of the management plan;

(E) for any year that Federal funds have been received under this section—

(i) submit an annual report to the Secretary that describes the activities, expenses, and income of the management entity (including grants to any other entities during the year that the report is made);

(ii) make available to the Secretary for audit all records relating to the expenditure of the funds and any matching funds;
(iii) require, with respect to all agreements authorizing expenditure of Federal funds by other organizations, that the organizations receiving the funds make available to the Secretary for audit all records concerning the expenditure of the funds; and

(F) encourage by appropriate means economic viability that is consistent with the Heritage Area.

(3) **Prohibition on the Acquisition of Real Property.**—The management entity shall not use Federal funds made available under this section to acquire real property or any interest in real property.

(4) **Cost-Sharing Requirement.**—The Federal share of the cost of any activity carried out using any assistance made available under this section shall be 50 percent.

(d) **Management Plan.**—

(1) **In General.**—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the management entity shall submit to the Secretary for approval a proposed management plan for the Heritage Area.

(2) **Requirements.**—The management plan shall—

(A) incorporate an integrated and cooperative approach for the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;

(B) take into consideration State and local plans;

(C) include—

(i) an inventory of—

(I) the resources located in the core area described in subsection (b)(2); and

(II) any other property in the core area that—

(aa) is related to the themes of the Heritage Area; and

(bb) should be preserved, restored, managed, or maintained because of the significance of the property;

(ii) comprehensive policies, strategies and recommendations for conservation, funding, management, and development of the Heritage Area;

(iii) a description of actions that governments, private organizations, and individuals have agreed to take to protect the natural, historical and cultural resources of the Heritage Area;

(iv) a program of implementation for the management plan by the management entity that includes a description of—

(I) actions to facilitate ongoing collaboration among partners to promote plans for resource protection, restoration, and construction; and

(II) specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the management entity or any government, organization, or individual for the first 5 years of operation;

(v) the identification of sources of funding for carrying out the management plan;

(vi) analysis and recommendations for means by which local, State, and Federal programs, including the role of the National Park Service in the Heritage
Area, may best be coordinated to carry out this section; and

(vii) an interpretive plan for the Heritage Area;

and

(D) recommend policies and strategies for resource management that consider and detail the application of appropriate land and water management techniques, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area.

(3) DEADLINE.—If a proposed management plan is not submitted to the Secretary by the date that is 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the management entity shall be ineligible to receive additional funding under this section until the date that the Secretary receives and approves the management plan.

(4) APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF MANAGEMENT PLAN.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of receipt of the management plan under paragraph (1), the Secretary, in consultation with the State, shall approve or disapprove the management plan.

(B) CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL.—In determining whether to approve the management plan, the Secretary shall consider whether—

(i) the management entity is representative of the diverse interests of the Heritage Area, including governments, natural and historic resource protection organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and recreational organizations;

(ii) the management entity has afforded adequate opportunity, including public hearings, for public and governmental involvement in the preparation of the management plan; and

(iii) the resource protection and interpretation strategies contained in the management plan, if implemented, would adequately protect the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Heritage Area.

(C) ACTION FOLLOWING DISAPPROVAL.—If the Secretary disapproves the management plan under subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall—

(i) advise the management entity in writing of the reasons for the disapproval;

(ii) make recommendations for revisions to the management plan; and

(iii) not later than 180 days after the receipt of any proposed revision of the management plan from the management entity, approve or disapprove the proposed revision.

(D) AMENDMENTS.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall approve or disapprove each amendment to the management plan that the Secretary determines make a substantial change to the management plan.

(ii) USE OF FUNDS.—The management entity shall not use Federal funds authorized by this section to
carry out any amendments to the management plan until the Secretary has approved the amendments.

(e) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this section affects the authority of a Federal agency to provide technical or financial assistance under any other law.

(2) CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION.—The head of any Federal agency planning to conduct activities that may have an impact on the Heritage Area is encouraged to consult and coordinate the activities with the Secretary and the management entity to the maximum extent practicable.

(3) OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.—Nothing in this section—

(A) modifies, alters, or amends any law or regulation authorizing a Federal agency to manage Federal land under the jurisdiction of the Federal agency;

(B) limits the discretion of a Federal land manager to implement an approved land use plan within the boundaries of the Heritage Area; or

(C) modifies, alters, or amends any authorized use of Federal land under the jurisdiction of a Federal agency.

(f) PRIVATE PROPERTY AND REGULATORY PROTECTIONS.—Nothing in this section—

(1) abridges the rights of any property owner (whether public or private), including the right to refrain from participating in any plan, project, program, or activity conducted within the Heritage Area;

(2) requires any property owner to permit public access (including access by Federal, State, or local agencies) to the property of the property owner, or to modify public access or use of property of the property owner under any other Federal, State, or local law;

(3) alters any duly adopted land use regulation, approved land use plan, or other regulatory authority of any Federal, State or local agency, or conveys any land use or other regulatory authority to the management entity;

(4) authorizes or implies the reservation or appropriation of water or water rights;

(5) diminishes the authority of the State to manage fish and wildlife, including the regulation of fishing and hunting within the Heritage Area; or

(6) creates any liability, or affects any liability under any other law, of any private property owner with respect to any person injured on the private property.

(g) EVALUATION; REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years before the date on which authority for Federal funding terminates for the Heritage Area, the Secretary shall—

(A) conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of the Heritage Area; and

(B) prepare a report in accordance with paragraph (3).

(2) EVALUATION.—An evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A) shall—

(A) assess the progress of the management entity with respect to—

(i) accomplishing the purposes of this section for the Heritage Area; and
(ii) achieving the goals and objectives of the approved management plan for the Heritage Area;

(B) analyze the Federal, State, local, and private investments in the Heritage Area to determine the leverage and impact of the investments; and

(C) review the management structure, partnership relationships, and funding of the Heritage Area for purposes of identifying the critical components for sustainability of the Heritage Area.

(3) REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Based on the evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall prepare a report that includes recommendations for the future role of the National Park Service, if any, with respect to the Heritage Area.

(B) REQUIRED ANALYSIS.—If the report prepared under subparagraph (A) recommends that Federal funding for the Heritage Area be reauthorized, the report shall include an analysis of—

(i) ways in which Federal funding for the Heritage Area may be reduced or eliminated; and

(ii) the appropriate time period necessary to achieve the recommended reduction or elimination.

(C) SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—On completion of the report, the Secretary shall submit the report to—

(i) the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate; and

(ii) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives.

(h) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $10,000,000, of which not more than $1,000,000 may be made available for any fiscal year.

(i) TERMINATION OF AUTHORITY.—The authority of the Secretary to provide assistance under this section terminates on the date that is 15 years after the date of enactment of this Act.
APPENDIX B: The Planning Process

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), is required for projects with federal funding. NEPA requires that federal agencies study the impacts of “major federal actions having a significant effect on the environment” and alternatives to those actions, and requires that agencies make that information an integral part of their decision-making processes. NEPA also requires that agencies make a diligent effort to involve the interested and affected public before they make decisions affecting the environment.

Planning for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has been undertaken in a manner such as to fully comply with NEPA requirements. The use of the NEPA process has been an integral part of best planning practices for the heritage area with the goals of engaging organizations and residents and exploring alternative futures for the heritage area. This Appendix is a record of that planning process. It includes a description of the scoping process and public participation, the issues discovered during scoping, and scenarios developed to allow discussion of choices by the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors (SdCNHA Board) as a way of providing guidance for the detailed management plan.

Environmental Compliance

In terms of environmental compliance, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Management Plan qualifies for Categorical Exclusion 3.3 R, and there are no extraordinary circumstances that may cause a significant environmental effect.

Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Park Service Director’s Order 12, Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision-making (DO-12, 2001), apply to listed actions that have no potential for measurable effects to the human environment. As applies to the management plan, Categorical Exclusion 3.3 R is for the “adoption or approval of surveys, studies, reports, plans and similar documents which will result in recommendations or proposed actions which would cause no or only minimal environmental impacts.” Note that actions categorically excluded under NEPA and Director’s Order 12 must still be reviewed for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The release of this management plan initiates that consultation process.

The Scoping Process

“Scoping” is a process through which existing conditions are assessed and potential issues are identified. In planning for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, scoping involved review of background materials, field observations, consultations with partners, public workshops, and workshops with the SdCNHA Board.

Scoping is an important part of any planning process, whether or not it is required by NEPA. Objectives of the scoping process included:

- Inventorying the historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational resources within the heritage area;
- Becoming familiar with the type and range of organizations that may have an interest in participating in Heritage Area initiatives;

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• Understanding the range of existing programs and initiatives that have the potential for partnership
  with the heritage area;

• Identifying the interests and needs of potential partners in implementing Heritage Area programs
  and initiatives that would support Heritage Area goals;

• Identifying opportunities and challenges that could influence management plan strategies, actions,
  and priorities; and

• Providing opportunities for participants to voice concerns, preferences, and views that could shape
  implementation of the management plan.

The scoping process began in advance of engaging the consulting team that produced the management plan.
The National Park Service held a planning workshop with the National Heritage Area Board of Directors on
August 1, 2009, and conducted a series of nine “community open house” meetings in March and April of
2010, in Alamosa, Blanca, Capulin, Conejos, Hooper, LaJara, Manassa, San Luis, and Sanford. These
introductory public meetings included a brief PowerPoint show and a two-page color handout created by the
NPS. Public comments were documented by NPS staff, who also provided a summary and an initial
directory of interested parties.

The scoping process continued in the fall of 2010 when the consulting team conducted three initial field
visits within the heritage area. These field visits included tours of the heritage area and a meeting with the
board in November of 2010. The board meeting provided the venue for introduction of the planning process
and an opportunity for board members to ask questions and provide general information about their
interests and goals.

With the conclusion of these initial visits in November, the team began an eight-month period of
information gathering and assessment of the heritage area’s existing conditions, which took place between
November 2010 and July 2011. Activities associated with the scoping process included:

• Stakeholder interviews held April 4-7, 2011 (which included a revised version of the handout
  created by the NPS):
  ▪ Federal officials representing the valley’s national wildlife refuges and the national park,
    and staff from the offices of Senators Bennet and Udall and Representative Tipton (the
    director of the USFS/BLM office serving the region could not attend; he was interviewed
    later);
  ▪ A group of individuals interested in interpretation and educational opportunities related to
    recreation and public lands, including representatives of the CO Department of Wildlife
    and the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management (USFS/BLM) and five current
    and former members of the National Heritage Area Board of Directors;
  ▪ A meeting with three representatives of the Costilla County Economic Development
    Council, based in San Luis, a conversation that continued with the consulting team’s
    attendance at the CCEDC’s meeting later that day;
  ▪ A meeting with a representative of the Land Rights Council, based in San Luis;
  ▪ A meeting with the mayor and three other representatives of the Town of San Luis;
  ▪ A meeting with six members and advisors of the Rio Culebra Agricultural Cooperative,
    based in San Luis;
  ▪ A meeting with two representatives of the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee;
- A meeting with four representatives of the Conejos County Tourism Council;
- An interview with the owner of two hotels recently opened in Antonito;
- A meeting with four representatives of the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad, a local attraction;
- A meeting with two community leaders interested in establishing a Conejos County Heritage Center;
- A meeting with two community leaders participating in the Antonito Depot Task Force;
- A meeting with two representatives of the San Luis Valley Museum Association;
- A meeting with the executive director of the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group;
- A meeting with the mayor of Alamosa;
- A meeting with about a dozen of the volunteers serving the Colorado Welcome Center;
- A meeting with the executive director of the Local Foods Coalition;
- A meeting with the operations manager of the Rio Grande Railroad;
- A meeting with the director of the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau (and a member of the SdCNHA Board);
- A meeting with five representatives of the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau Board;
- A meeting with economic development experts, the director of the Small Business Development Council and the director of the Adams State College Community Partnerships Program;
- A meeting with the director and staff person for the San Luis Valley Water Conservancy District;
- A meeting with federal staff and volunteers associated with the Old Spanish Trail; one of the federal staff has also been assisting the Los Caminos Antiguos Historic and Scenic Byway; and
- A representative of The Nature Conservancy who discussed that organization’s involvement in the valley.

- A Saturday retreat on April 9, 2011, with the SdCNHA Board, to review issues and goals;
- Three intensive “Main Street” workshops with representatives of San Luis, Antonito, and Alamosa on May 2 and May 3, 2011;
- A workshop with the National Heritage Area Board of Directors and staff on May 4, 2011, to review draft issues and goals in combination with previous analysis by the NPS, and to set a preliminary order of priority. Goals were largely derived from original NPS suggestions, with some adjustments and additions. The following were key questions addressed to the Board:

  - **Projects & Strategies:** What specific projects, kinds of projects, or strategies/programs should the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area make possible?
  - **Issues:** What issues or problems should the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area address and/or attempt to solve?
Focus: The heritage area offers a wide range of possibilities for action – what kind of focus would you encourage?

Relationships: What are key partners and relationships?

Role: What should be the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s role in addressing the opportunities you see?

- Guidance from the workshop was augmented by responses from several directors to a brief set of questions sent out via email in late May; and

- A workshop with the National Heritage Area Board of Directors and staff on June 14, 2011, which resulted in a near-final list of goals. These were refined by a committee of the board which met on July 19, 2011, working with a redline-edit version to show progressive changes, and made final edits; these were discussed and accepted by consensus by the Board at its July 27, 2011, meeting.

Issues Identified through Scoping

The scoping process identified issues — both positive and negative — that might influence the development of the management plan. These issues are outlined below and are based upon review of background materials, assessment of existing conditions, consultations with partner agencies and organizations, and input received through public workshops, focus group workshops, and workshops with the SdCNHA Board.

Opportunities and Challenges

The National Heritage Area Board of Directors developed list of opportunities and challenges at a workshop on April 9, 2011, reproduced below. It was organized under several broad topics related to the heritage area’s mission, vision, and goals, and the purposes enumerated in the heritage area’s enabling legislation.

Culture & Community

Protect living heritage resources — language, art, traditions, spiritual, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.

Opportunities

- Agriculture remains a central element of the region’s heritage and economy. Most communities referenced their agricultural traditions as being both worthy of preservation and as a potential resource for tourism.

- SdCNHA could convene partners to help plan specific strategies for supporting and promoting traditional agricultural practices and products.

Challenges

- Public memory of land grants.

- Preservation of local dialect is being lost; words are different; standard Spanish is taught in schools – local dialect is not supported or acknowledged.

- Authenticity of stories/folklore; need place for folklore and oral tradition; but need accurate research.

- Loss of cultural crafts, food traditions; herbal traditions.

- Religious heritage (Sacred Circle tour, Penitentes, local festivals); need to talk to parish priests.

- Local foods – relationship to sustainability and economic development; branding, marketing and distribution issues; how to allow use of local products in local institutions like schools and prisons (local access = healthy community).
• Understanding of the unique characteristics of current agriculture here (e.g., vitality captured from the sun).

• Need to communicate understanding of changes in agriculture over time (loss of small farming/farmers; transitions, e.g., vegetables to alfalfa, sheep to cattle).

• Sustainability – gone from a sustainable system to a non-sustainable system today (began after WW2).

• Family ownership – loss of next generation for agriculture in entire valley (CSU extension has information on average age of farmers); farmers are selling their land and water rights.

**Land Stewardship, Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation**

Sustain, enhance, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities as a significant element of the heritage of the SdCNHA and as a means of stimulating heritage tourism.

**Opportunities**

• Shifts in recreation patterns (additional ‘nonconsumptive’ uses, e.g., photography, birding).

**Challenges**

• Limited access to public lands; roads being closed – partially a funding issue (George: not really a funding issue; don’t need to be maintained).

• Shifts in recreation patterns (additional ‘nonconsumptive’ uses, e.g., photography, birding).

• Developing opportunities for recreation inside and outside of public lands (some areas do not have public lands – develop open space access, facilities, and use; trails, etc.).

• Safety.

• Lack of information or lack of communicating what is available; awareness of opportunities is an issue; support services and facilities not communicated or even organized (hiking, biking, boating, birding, fishing, hunting, etc.); need links to make research easier.

• Some public lands information is available in offices but not online; public lands center does not interface well; under-planned and under-funded.

• Issue of coordination across state lines (hunting/fishing licenses not coordinated; guidebooks should acknowledge users in both states).

• Issue of private land owners wanting their own access to adjacent public lands.

• Some BLM lands are not accessible; surrounded by private land (not really our issue); continuity of links between BLM and USFS lands.

• In Costilla, unintentional trespassing on private lands; need good information (stay positive: “where CAN you go?”).

• Conflicts among interest groups (grazing vs. recreation).

• Forest beetle kill.

• Fire management use issues (older, outdated plans?); government lets it burn; forest management (not managing for healthy ecosystem); wildlife not managed for healthy ecosystem but for hunting (not our issue).
Engaging our Young People
Both through specific projects and as a general goal, community leaders identified engaging the region’s youth with their heritage as a priority.

Opportunities
- Working with a variety of partner organizations – schools, YCC, recreation centers, churches, Cumbres/Toltec RR, etc. – SdCNHA could help to plan and develop programs for youth that use heritage as a basis for education, community service, employment, recreation, arts, multi-generational interactions, and leadership development.
- Engage youth in our mission and process.
- Engage youth in community activities.

Challenges
- Need to establish local curriculum – local history is not taught in schools; state history doesn’t recognize Valley history
- Limits of standard curriculum and tests – needs to come from another source other than schools (community centers, etc.)
- Need to relate to school districts – how can we build partnerships?

Historic Preservation and Cultural Resources
Community leaders are strongly interested in – and actively working on – projects to restore and protect important sites and structures and document and preserve artifacts, oral and written histories, and artistic and other traditions. Some of the unique aspects of the region’s heritage – cemeteries, moradas, land grants, historic settlements, agricultural traditions, etc. – were identified as critically important research and preservation needs.

Opportunities
- The SdCNHA could work to secure financial and technical support for these projects and – as appropriate – sponsor efforts to promote understanding and use of the protected resources.

Challenges
- “Disease” of stucco; people installing stucco over brick and wood frame historic buildings because it is easy and inexpensive.
- Education and support for preservation; lack of awareness; lack of funding support.
- Empty and poorly cared-for buildings.
- Adobe is a dying art; lack of craftsmen (other skills, too – e.g., caring for brick).
- Historic structures in private hands not appreciated and cared for appropriately.
- Compatible land use for preservation – zoning resisted; historic districts resisted; no historic preservation in code; poor economic conditions do not encourage preservation; lack of design guidelines – voluntary or not – for new construction.
- Historic structures not recognized or preserved: bridges, cemeteries, etc.
- Need for inventory of historic structures.
- Lack of regional planning (2005/6 regional planning project was discouraged – Lincoln Institute from Cambridge, MA).
Local contractors have trouble meeting bonding requirements; contractors are brought in from outside.

Cost of preservation techniques.

**Interpretation and Presentation**
In all of the meetings, community leaders expressed interest in establishing or strengthening public facilities that serve – in a variety of different ways – as SdCNHA Heritage Centers.

**Opportunities**
- The region’s existing museums, welcome centers, visitor centers, community centers, under-used or vacant historic structures, and other public amenities could be transformed into an interconnected network of centers offering heritage-related information, events and activities, collections and exhibits, and other services to both residents and visitors. Coordinated administration, technical and financial assistance, and programming could help improve the quality and sustainability of operations. The SdCNHA could convene facility managers and community support groups to plan and develop interpretive themes, exhibits, professional support, training, youth interns or docent programs, and other aspects of the Center activities.
- Interpretation and artwork in communities branded to heritage and heritage area (8,000 artists in the Valley of 49,000 people?).
- Community would benefit from interpretation.

**Challenges**
- Little information available in communities for visitors – lack of appropriate outdoor interpretive exhibits and markers.

**Visitor Experience, Heritage Tourism, and Economic Development**
At both the regional and community level, a need was identified for identifying and promoting routes that connect heritage resources. An integrated system of regional corridors, designated gateways and roadside pullouts, and community walking or driving tours could help to identify key sites and provide information on the interpretive themes of the National Heritage Area. The National Heritage Area could work with the Caminos Antiguos Byway and other groups to support planning for these routes, including signage and design guidelines, which would help to establish a clear regional identity for the area. Identity is important – heritage area must become known to the public.

**Opportunities**
- Existing and desirable levels of tourism vary widely throughout the region, but nearly all communities have local businesses, heritage sites, or events that welcome visitors.
- The SdCNHA could strengthen this tourism by fostering a “heritage tourism network” of businesses, attractions, and community event committees and supporting promotion and marketing, sponsoring training and technical assistance, and perhaps even officially certifying/endorsing businesses and attractions that meet basic criteria.
- Cultural shift occurring.
- Board members are key to changing local attitudes.

**Challenges**
- People feel are losing cultural identity through tourism; some people don’t want it (“fear of Telluride”) – worried about being displaced; local families won’t be able to be afford to live there if
tourism is successful and community changes (need to grow from within); scale issue; growth would create change; what are the consequences of success?

- Where are/should visitors be welcome?
- Hospitality: people don’t want aggressive sales people.
- Business coordination in terms of operation, etc.
- Need to satisfy visitor expectations – long way to go – e.g., seasonal, daily closure.
- Appearance of downtowns with empty buildings that are poorly maintained.
- Residents are hesitant to take the risk to implement a new idea; what is heritage area role?

Partnerships, Organization, and Management

Opportunities

- Community partners currently sponsor numerous events and activities for both residents and visitors. The SdCNHA could market and promote these events at a regional level, and support – through funding and/or volunteers – elements that explicitly perpetuate and celebrate the region’s diverse cultural and natural heritage.

Challenges

- Local festivals – unique and high quality, but not marketed and would like visitors.

Issues and Goals

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors and staff met on May 4, 2011, to review potential goals drawn from material developed so far, a combination of issues discussed by the Board on April 9, 2011, and earlier facilitation work provided by the NPS (a summary from nine public meetings, spring 2010; and a record of an August 2009 Board retreat). The “interleaved” ideas appear in Table B-1; draft goals were largely derived from original NPS suggestions, with some adjustments and additions. Directors participated in a priority-setting exercise that indicated high levels of support for tourism, historic preservation, and the preservation of “living heritage.” The board also recognized that all activities are priorities – discussion suggested that the heritage area will ultimately address all of these points, strategically choosing elements for early, mid-term, and long term action, and that the reason for many of the directors’ choices was their sense that by tackling that item first, many other items would be addressed because of perceived overlaps. The material considered on May 4 led directly to the goals shown in Chapter 1 of the management plan.

Potential Goals and Strategies to Address Issues, in Ranked Order

- **Tourism:** Increase visitation through interpretation, heritage development projects and events, and promotion of heritage tourism in order to stimulate heritage preservation and economic development. (Through discussion, the board added issues of cross-marketing, wayfinding, marketing overall.)

- **Historic Preservation:** Support the preservation, use/reuse, rehabilitation, and/or restoration of historic buildings as a top priority in all heritage development projects.

- **Living Heritage:** Protect living heritage resources—language, art, traditions, spiritual, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.

- **Agriculture:** Promote and interpret agriculture as a way of life a, vital aspect of the cultural and scenic landscape and experience of place, and critical element of the regional economy.
• **Interpretation:** Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of touring routes.

• **Living Landscape:** (Added to original list through discussion)

• **Young people:** Stimulate involvement of young people in all aspects of the National Heritage Area’s work, learning opportunities, and governance.

• **Awareness:** Foster an awareness, understanding and pride for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area among its residents and Colorado residents in general. Workshop discussion/identity/values/community spirit

• **Business:** Foster business retention, expansion and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships.

• **Events:** Sustain, enhance, and promote existing events and celebrations.

• **Outdoor Recreation:** Sustain, enhance, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities as a significant element of the heritage of the SdCNHA and as a means of stimulating heritage tourism.

• **Communications:** Establish open and consistent communication with organizations and the public.

• **Downtown/Main Street:** (Added to original list through discussion)

**Values and Role**
On May 4, 2011, the board and staff also discussed the values they would expect to apply (or intangible results they would like to stimulate) as they undertake all programs and actions. The following words will provide guidance in a statement of values and roles:

• Inclusive
• Blend/share information
• Every part benefits from all other parts
• Hospitality/welcome (we are all “ambassadors”)
• Lead by example
• Respect
• Interaction/sharing
• Solutions/actions/results
• Relationships
### Table B-1: Issues, Strategies, and Projects Considered on May 4, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>General Direction, Policies and Programs</th>
<th>Specific Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase visitation through interpretation, heritage development projects and events, and promotion of heritage tourism to stimulate heritage preservation and economic development.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Foster business retention, expansion and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships. *</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing and desirable levels of tourism vary widely throughout the region, but nearly all communities have local businesses, heritage sites, or events that welcome visitors. The SdCNHA could strengthen this tourism by fostering a “heritage tourism network” of businesses, attractions, and community event committees and supporting promotion and marketing, sponsoring training and technical assistance, and perhaps even officially certifying/endorsing businesses and attractions that meet basic criteria.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural shift occurring</td>
<td>Improve “tourist readiness” by ___% in 5 years</td>
<td>Promote the NHA sites to the annual 300,000 Great Sand Dunes visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People feel are losing cultural identity through tourism; some people don’t want it (“fear of Telluride”) – worried about being displaced; local families won’t be able to be afforded to live there if tourism is successful and community changes (need to grow from within); scale issue; growth would create change; what are the consequences of success?</td>
<td>Support tourist and commuter train rides within the NHA</td>
<td>Interconnect the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway and the Old Spanish National Historic Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where are/should visitors be welcome?</td>
<td>Technology: need to communicate what is available (websites); wireless connections needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitality: people don’t want aggressive sales people</td>
<td>Need to educate local officials to goals and policies to manage and support heritage tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board members are key to changing local attitudes</td>
<td>Need for hospitality training for frontline staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business coordination in terms of operation, etc.</td>
<td>Idea: create a referral agency?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to satisfy visitor expectations – long way to go – e.g., seasonal, daily closure</td>
<td>Wayfinding signage as a visual link; signage system (directional signs, entrance signs)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearance of downtowns with empty buildings that are poorly maintained</td>
<td>Design standards for signage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents are hesitant to take the risk to implement a new idea; what is heritage area role?</td>
<td>Stabilize the economic viability of Visitor Centers in the NHA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Support and promote the Howard’s Store (NHR) Gun Shop/Howard’s Store Museum, Hooper – Increase potential residential, commercial use</td>
<td>Create a “heritage tourism network” of businesses, heritage sites, and events that welcome visitors.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Revitalize downtown districts within the NHA</td>
<td>Restore historic buildings</td>
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Table B-1: Issues, Strategies, and Projects Considered on May 4, 2011

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<th>Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve infrastructures such as parking, cleaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support retail development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tie in economic strategies to partner history with tourism – business partnerships</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Promote and interpret agriculture as a way of life as a vital aspect of the cultural and scenic landscape and experience of place, and critical element of the regional economy.*

Agriculture remains a central element of the region’s heritage and economy. Most communities referenced their agricultural traditions as being both worthy of preservation and as a potential resource for tourism. SdCNHA could convene partners to help plan specific strategies for supporting and promoting traditional agricultural practices and products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agri-tourism potential</th>
<th>Support agri-tourism events such as farmer’s markets, roadside stands – promote the heritage area’s traditional farming practices and increase economic development to the area</th>
<th>Develop an interpretive plan for agricultural history at the Wayside Dairy/the Ranch/Centennial Farm – Utilize the site to educate the public on the significance of agricultural history</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local foods – relationship to sustainability and economic development; branding, marketing and distribution issues; how to allow use of local products in local institutions like schools and prisons (local access = healthy community)</td>
<td>Support agricultural tours – Develop partnerships and be involved in workshops, festivals and farmer’s markets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the unique characteristics of current agriculture here (e.g., vitality captured from the sun)</td>
<td>Establish organic farming practices throughout the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area – Grow organics and sell organic products locally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to communicate understanding of changes in agriculture over time (loss of small farming/farmers; transitions, e.g., vegetables to alfalfa, sheep to cattle)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability – gone from a sustainable system to a non-sustainable system today (began after WW2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potential of value-added agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family ownership – loss of next generation for agriculture in entire valley (CSU extension has information on average age of farmers), farmers are selling their land and water rights</td>
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</table>

Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches.
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<tr>
<td>Establish visitor facilities.</td>
<td>Build information centers and visitor centers in the North, South, East and West points of the heritage area – Bring awareness of the heritage area</td>
<td>Establish a Gateway to Colorado Heritage Center – Promotion and education for residents and visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop displays at existing tourism information centers and museums – Bring major awareness to the heritage area</td>
<td>Construct an information center in San Luis – Educate visitors on cultural events, authenticity; provide information in English and Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a community center in Hooper at Hooper Elementary School – Rehabilitation of abandoned structure to serve as a community center, fine art center, B-&amp;-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Revitalize the Opera House in Manassa to function as a community center – Use the community center to exhibit the history of the city’s settlement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Restore the SPMDTU in Antonito to function as a community center – Support events and community activities within a historic structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Save and protect Bishop’s building and old fort in Manassa – Use the structure to teach local residents and visitors of the significance of Mormon history to the area</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Restore San Rafael Church in Mogote – Utilize the site for education and promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a community center in Mosca at the Mosca Gymnasium – Rehabilitation of infrastructure to serve as community center</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all of the meetings, community leaders expressed interest in establishing or strengthening public facilities that serve – in a variety of different ways – as SdCNHA Heritage Centers. The region’s existing museums, welcome centers, visitor centers, community centers, under-used or vacant historic structures, and other public amenities could be transformed into an inter-connected network of centers offering heritage-related information, events and activities, collections and exhibits, and other services to both residents and visitors. Coordinated administration, technical and financial assistance, and programming could help improve the quality and sustainability of operations. The SdCNHA could convene facility managers and community support groups to plan and develop interpretive themes, exhibits, professional support, training, youth intern or docent programs, and other aspects of the Center activities.
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<tr>
<td>Interpret the themes of the National Heritage Area through a variety of approaches.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretation and artwork in communities branded to heritage and heritage area (8,000 artists in the Valley of 49,000 people?)</td>
<td>Restore, revitalize, and maintain cemeteries (i.e., in Capulin) – involve community with the restoration process and educate youth on the importance of respecting elders</td>
<td>Restore Capulin Community Center [is this a historic building?] – Restore center to function for recreational uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community would benefit from interpretation</td>
<td>Build strong partnerships</td>
<td>Create a museum in Mosca or Hooper at the Hooper School – Preserve and interpret farming techniques and the significance of farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little information available in communities for visitors – lack of appropriate outdoor interpretive exhibits and markers</td>
<td>Maintain local museums and artifacts</td>
<td>Construct a museum that encompasses the themes of the history of the Mormon settlement in Manassa – Create a space to develop exhibits that interpret the history and significance of Mormon history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restore museums in the NHA</td>
<td>Complete structural work on the Sanford Museum – Complete work on roof, landscaping, and heating system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpret and promote the following historical themes and stories through brochures and/or tours: Japanese Internment Camp; German Prisoner Camp; Mining history; Historic churches; Medano/Zapata Ranch; Amish Culture; Traditional cultural practices such as shearing sheep, fiber arts, and Aspen graffiti; The creation and use of locations that serve as movie sets (old town streets, natural scenic areas); VIPs, local political leaders, Town planning and land use; Land Grant History (provide road signage with name and boundary information)</td>
<td>Rehabilitate the San Luis Museum and Cultural Center – Provide information on the history and culture of the heritage area through exhibits, events, and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fund exhibits in local museums – Interpret moradas and their significance to the areas</td>
<td>Create a heritage repository for documents, records, and historic, archeological artifacts, farming implements – Establish a sustainable repository for research and education</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Direction, Policies and Programs</td>
<td>Develop a museum consortium of local museums – Provide a networking tool and professional development</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include historical education and interpretation of Railroad in SLV and our whole country</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idea: interpret Valley to high school senior class on train</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idea: docent core as guides (training and quality) – more knowledgeable docents needed</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create <em>brochure and signage at the</em> Pike’s <em>Stockade</em> – provide general information at the site (hours, days, tours); establish an education component for visitors and school groups, make the site publicly accessible</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In building the interpretive system, focus on the development of touring routes.

At both the regional and community level, a need was identified for identifying and promoting routes that connect heritage resources. An integrated system of regional corridors, designated gateways and roadside pullouts, and community walking or driving tours could help to identify key sites and provide information on the interpretive themes of the SdCNHA. NHA could work with the Caminos Antiguos Byway and other groups to support planning for these routes, including signage and design guidelines, which would help to establish a clear regional identity for the area.

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<td>Develop <strong>driving and walking tours</strong> – Allow for information to be publicly accessible to a wide variety of audiences</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Road pull-offs with interpretive signage and picnic tables – Promote heritage tourism</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support and promote the Public Art/Murals Tours – Promote ongoing programs</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create road stop <strong>rest stops and kiosks</strong> throughout various points in the heritage area – Entice visitors to stop</td>
<td>Specific Projects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Develop interpretive and promotional projects with Los Caminos Antiguos Byway – Partnership with Los Caminos to promote the heritage area and develop road signage along the byway.

Develop an educational walking tour of the Antonito Railyard – Promote the significance of the railroad to the town of Antonito and other heritage area sites.

Document the Old Spanish Trail through the heritage area – Create an interpretation of the significance of trail routes through the heritage area.

Develop interpretive signage at the Mosca Cemetery, Mosca – Develop signage for grave sites, historic marker at cemetery.
### Table B-1: Issues, Strategies, and Projects Considered on May 4, 2011

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<tr>
<td>General Direction, Policies and Programs</td>
<td>Establish interpretive roadside signage throughout the heritage area – develop signage with brief historical information about the heritage area</td>
<td>Construct interpretive kiosks in Hooper, at the Great Sand Dunes Gateway – interpret the natural, cultural history of the heritage area</td>
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<td>Support the preservation, use/reuse, rehabilitation, and/or restoration of historic buildings as a top priority in all heritage development projects.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leaders are strongly interested in – and actively working on – projects to restore and protect important sites and structures and document and preserve artifacts, oral and written histories, and artistic and other traditions. Some of the unique aspects of the region’s heritage – cemeteries, moradas, land grants, historic settlements, agricultural traditions, etc – were identified as critically important research and preservation needs. The SdCNHA could work to secure financial and technical support for these projects and – as appropriate – sponsor efforts to promote understanding and use of the protected resources.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Disease” of stucco; people installing stucco over brick and wood frame historic buildings because it is easy and inexpensive</td>
<td>Promote a preservation ethic through education, training and publicity</td>
<td>Purchase the Wachauer Mansion to be used as a cultural center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and support for preservation; lack of awareness; lack of funding support</td>
<td>Seek funding for solar retrofit of historic buildings</td>
<td>Support the Antonito Depot project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty and poorly cared-for buildings</td>
<td>Restore the railroads within the NHA (rail beds and rails, historic depots)</td>
<td>Establish a community center in Hooper at Hooper Elementary School – Rehabilitation of abandoned structure to serve as a community center, fine art center, B&amp;B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adobe is a dying art; lack of craftsmen (other skills, too – e.g., caring for brick)</td>
<td>Provide incentives to property owners for structural improvements on historic structures</td>
<td>Revitalize the Opera House in Manassa to function as a community center – Use the community center to exhibit the history of the city’s settlement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic structures in private hands not appreciated and cared for appropriately</td>
<td>Repair work on historic structures and cultural symbols – Preserve historic and cultural resources to use as educational tools</td>
<td>Restore the SPMDTU in Antonito to function as a community center – Support events and community activities within a historic structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatible land use for preservation – zoning resisted; historic districts resisted; no historic preservation in code; poor economic conditions do not encourage preservation; lack of design guidelines – voluntary or not – for new construction</td>
<td>Provide property owners with basic awareness and preservation tools; easy steps</td>
<td>Save and protect Bishop’s building and old fort in Manassa – Use the structure to teach local residents and visitors of the significance of Mormon history to the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic structures not recognized or preserved: bridges, cemeteries, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Restore San Rafael Church in Mogote – Utilize the site for education and promotion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage Strategies, LLC**

B-16
### Table B-1: Issues, Strategies, and Projects Considered on May 4, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>General Direction, Policies and Programs</th>
<th>Specific Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for inventory of historic structures</td>
<td>Establish a community center in Mosca at the Mosca Gymnasium – Rehabilitation of infrastructure to serve as community center</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of regional planning (2005/6 regional planning project was discouraged – Lincoln Institute from Cambridge, MA)</td>
<td>Restore Capulin Community Center [is this a historic building?] – Restore center to function for recreational uses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local contractors have trouble meeting bonding requirements; contractors are brought in from outside</td>
<td>Take care of the McIntire Springs/Mansion Trade lands</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of preservation techniques</td>
<td>On the Alamosa Riverwalk, create facilities for events–concerts, festivals and symposiums</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protect living heritage resources—language, art, traditions, spiritual, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public memory of land grants</td>
<td>Create a heritage and arts program/coordination to support and promote community projects:</td>
<td>Support Santuario de los Pobladores Shrine (as a part of the proposed heritage and arts program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work with local artists on the bench and mural project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promote the community sculpture program (art on the corners)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Seek insurance to protect public art</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Promote 1% for art for all public projects through ordinances and legislation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Infuse the Arts Council</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work with local artists to restore murals and create new murals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Organize and conduct workshops on living history and stage the presentation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Establish an Art Program – Work with local artists, schools and actors to develop theatrical productions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preservation of local dialect is being lost; words are different; standard Spanish is taught in schools – local dialect is not supported or acknowledged</td>
<td>Protect the San Luis Valley language</td>
<td>Develop a language and history curriculum for the first and secondary schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>General Direction, Policies and Programs</th>
<th>Specific Projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need to establish local curriculum – local history is not taught in schools; state history doesn’t recognize Valley history</td>
<td>Record and archive oral histories throughout the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area – Record local citizens’ oral histories</td>
<td>Work with local artists on the bench and mural project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits of standard curriculum and tests – needs to come from another source other than schools (community centers, etc.)</td>
<td>Build a digital historic photo archive – Involve youth in the digitization process</td>
<td>Restore local murals in San Luis, Antonito, and Manassa (as a part of the heritage and arts program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity of stories/folklore; need place for folklore and oral tradition; but need accurate research</td>
<td>Record traditional songs – Preserve the significance of music to the local history and culture</td>
<td>Create a heritage repository for documents, records, and historic, archeological artifacts, farming implements – Establish a sustainable repository for research and education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of cultural crafts, food traditions; herbal traditions</td>
<td>Document land grant history and genealogy – Establish a repository for land grant resources to be used for research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious heritage (Sacred Circle tour, Penitentes, local festivals); need to talk to parish priests</td>
<td>Organize food demonstrations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inventory information and artifacts of the First Nation – Make information accessible for researchers and tribes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory information and artifacts of the First Nation – Make information accessible for researchers and tribes</td>
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</table>

**Sustain, enhance, and promote existing events and celebrations.**

Community partners currently sponsor numerous events and activities for both residents and visitors. The SiCNHA could market and promote these events at a regional level, and support – through funding and/or volunteers – elements that explicitly perpetuate and celebrate the region’s diverse cultural and natural heritage.

Local festivals – unique and high quality, but not marketed and would like visitors

Support heritage related activities at events and celebrations – Increase understanding and appreciation of traditions and heritage.

**Sustain, enhance, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities as a significant element of the heritage of the SiCNHA and as a means of stimulating heritage tourism.**

Limited access to public lands; roads being closed – partially a funding issue (George: not really a funding issue; don’t need to be maintained)

Create open space, pathways, and recreation areas for communities.

Develop a riverwalk along the Rio Grande River through the NHA within the next 5 years, including interpretation and recreation opportunities – trails, boating and fishing.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shifts in recreation patterns (EW note: additional ‘nonconsumptive’ uses, e.g., photography, birding)</td>
<td>Weave Alamosa Ranch into the NHA planning efforts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing opportunities for recreation inside and outside of public lands (some areas do not have public lands – develop open space access, facilities, and use; trails, etc.)</td>
<td>San Luis Valley Heritage Tourism itineraries [what is this? Is it related to recreation and public lands?]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of information or lack of communicating what is available; awareness of opportunities is an issue; support services and facilities not communicated or even organized (hiking, biking, boating, birding, fishing, hunting, etc.); need links to make research easier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some public lands information is available in offices but not online; public lands center does not interface well; under-planned and under-funded;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue of coordination across state lines (hunting/fishing licenses not coordinated; guidebooks should acknowledge users in both states)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue of private land owners wanting their own access to adjacent public lands</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some BLM lands are not accessible; surrounded by private land (not really our issue); continuity of links between BLM and USFS lands</td>
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<tr>
<td>In Costilla, unintentional trespassing on private lands; need good information (stay positive: &quot;where CAN you go?&quot;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conflicts among interest groups (grazing vs. recreation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest beetle kill</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire management use issues (older, outdated plans?); government lets it burn; forest management (not managing for healthy ecosystem); wildlife not managed for healthy ecosystem but for hunting (not our issue)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stimulate involvement of young people in all aspects of the National Heritage Area’s work, learning opportunities, and governance.</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table B-1: Issues, Strategies, and Projects Considered on May 4, 2011

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<tr>
<td>Both through specific projects and as a general goal, community leaders identified engaging the region’s youth with their heritage as a priority. Working with a variety of partner organizations – schools, YCC, recreation centers, churches, Cumbres/Toltec RR, etc. – SdCNHA could help to plan and develop programs for youth that use heritage as a basis for education, community service, employment, recreation, arts, multi-generational interactions, and leadership development.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage youth in our mission and process</td>
<td><strong>Develop a locally based curriculum for K-12 students within 2-3 year.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage youth in community activities</td>
<td>Have an SdCNHA youth advisory board!</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Need to relate to school districts – how can we build partnerships?</td>
<td>Need to create network among groups that are doing things in isolation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop education criteria to include SdCNHA topics as part of Colorado history classes in middle school</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seek funding for K-12 curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work with local school districts to implement curriculum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop an <em>agricultural mentor program</em> expanding on existing programs – Connect youth to agriculture, and get them excited about careers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a <em>curriculum on the history of the Valley</em> with the school districts – Educate youth on local history by using local resources as an educational tool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Foster an awareness, understanding and pride for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area among its residents and Colorado residents in general.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity is important – heritage area must become known to the public</th>
<th>Identity and branding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social networking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be present at events – need to inventory and plan, figure out how to participate (booth or exhibit? Volunteers?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate the community, especially youth, about cultural history and historic preservation and its importance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote a preservation ethic through education, training and publicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hold educational forums</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner with KRZA for program funding</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create, documenting model for novellas (stories) history told by elders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support and build upon existing events</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a system to share resources in all counties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct workshops and classes on living history models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct workshops and classes on living history models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish open and consistent communication with organizations and the public</td>
<td>Press releases, list serve, newsletters, website, meetings, Web 2.0, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthen the organization’s capacity to achieve its mission</td>
<td>Create Vision/Mission statement (done)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop strong advisory support, i.e. attorney, banker, political liaison</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hire an Executive Director (done)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a strong and diverse board of directors to govern and support the SdCNHA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop alliances that enhance the capacity of the NHA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create partnerships to assist in all aspects of NHA projects that are mutually beneficial</td>
<td>Establish SdCNHA as a 501(c)(3) organization by the end of 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify 2-3 “early action projects” within six months</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish small matching grant program</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a matching funds strategy for grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a calendar of projects, events, meetings, grant deadlines, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a SdCNHA Management Plan</td>
<td>Finalize management plan within one year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a public involvement strategy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet with eight communities/areas by spring 2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify networks, partners and public groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identify resources and projects in the three county area that are community priorities and coincide with the NHA effort by summer 2010</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Look for partner potential</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify actions to realize projects (achievable steps to success)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a fundraising strategy and timeline for project implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify existing and potential funding sources and partners (local, state, federal, public and private)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet with key partners and potential funders</td>
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Consideration of Scenarios

The planning process for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area management plan included consideration of scenarios for how the heritage area would be organized, implemented, and managed. The purpose of the scenarios process is to follow the logical flow of various approaches that would meet the goals set by the SdCNHA Board; explore implications, benefits, and drawbacks of these approaches; and decide which, if any, are best suited to meet the goals of the heritage area and serve the interests and needs of the region. Although this process bore some resemblance to NEPA’s requirement for exploration of alternatives, in this case it was employed simply as good planning practice. It allowed the heritage area board and its partners to explore different ideas and test the implications of contrasting priorities.

From August through October of 2011, the National Heritage Area Board of Directors and staff considered two scenarios for the future of the heritage area, based on input solicited from partners as described above. The purpose of creating scenarios was to explore possibilities for the heritage area’s development.

On August 8, 2011, the National Heritage Area Board of Directors approved a version of the scenarios prepared for public meetings, which were conducted during the evening over the following three days (August 9, 10, 11). Approximately 15 people attended each meeting. Each meeting included two handouts (the scenarios plus the vision and goals). A PowerPoint presentation that broke down the scenarios into topics was followed by discussion keying off this general question: What topic do you want to see addressed first or most thoroughly in the plan? An additional comment concerning interpretation and preservation of Hispano traditions was received by email from a participant in one of the workshops.

The Board met again on September 12, 2011, to review the input from those workshops and meet with the consulting team to focus on how heritage tourism and community enhancement might play out under Scenario B. On October 10, 2011, the Board did the same for interpretive planning, approving a general concept to be put to a group of partners assembled on October 11. On October 27, the Board approved Scenario B as a general guide for the management plan.

The two scenarios considered are as follows:

Scenario A assumes that existing conditions continue as they are, with current initiatives proceeding without the added component of a National Heritage Area. This is the baseline for comparison with the other scenario and serves as the “No Action” scenario with respect to NEPA compliance.

Scenario B proposes a set of initiatives that, together, would create a comprehensive National Heritage Area program within the San Luis Valley as envisioned in the heritage area’s enabling legislation. It was proposed that this scenario be the focus of discussion and that the nature and scope of its various separate but related initiatives be modified, shaped, and refined based upon the expressed interests and capabilities of the heritage area’s partners.

For both scenarios, initiatives are organized under nine headings or topics representing potential areas of programmatic activity based upon the heritage area’s enabling legislation and issues identified through discussions with local organizations and individuals.

Scenario A — Current Conditions Continue
Under Current Conditions Continue the San Luis Valley would continue to develop without programming offered through the National Heritage Area. Existing programs would continue to evolve as they are presently organized.
Interpretation and Presentation A:
- The Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Fort Garland Museum, and Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad continue to be the Valley’s primary attractions. All three collaborate with regional marketing initiatives. Other natural and historical interpretive sites continue to offer interpretive programming with occasional collaboration and coordination. Los Caminos Antiguos completes its interpretive wayside system and is marketed as an attraction.

Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism A:
- Existing regional attractions are marketed primarily through the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Colorado Welcome Center in Alamosa, and individual web sites and marketing materials. The City of Alamosa continues to be the regional center for visitor services. Other towns provide visitor services through their own entrepreneurial and marketing initiatives.

Culture & Community A:
- Communities continue to develop cultural programming and strengthen their sense of place through local initiatives. Churches play a strong role in the cultural life of communities. Cultural groups coexist and interact but do not necessarily fully engage with each other.

Engaging our Young People A:
- Several museums such as Fort Garland and the San Luis Valley Museum offer educational programming for school groups. Churches and local cultural organizations offer programs to engage local young people in community life.

Economic Revitalization A:
- Specialized agriculture continues to be the leading economic sector within the Valley. Local business leaders coordinate cooperative initiatives within their respective communities. Solar energy production continues to develop in strategically placed locations.

Historic Preservation A:
- Historic preservation programs are initiated in Alamosa through nonprofit initiatives and tourism and commercial revitalization strategies but are dependent primarily upon isolated individual initiatives in most of the region’s other communities.

Land Stewardship and Natural Resources A:
- Strong land preservation and stewardship collaborations continue Valley-wide through the efforts of local, state and federal governmental entities and regional and national nonprofit organizations. Water rights and the preservation of water resources are the driving factors related to natural resource conservation.

Outdoor Recreation A:
- Recreational opportunities are available on public lands within and surrounding the Valley. Hunting and fishing play a major role in the economies some local communities. Route 160 is a primary RV migration route through the Valley.

Organization & Management A:
- Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla Counties continue separate programming initiatives. Alamosa County and city programs are most developed due to their larger economies. Some coordination, guidance, and support are available through a few regional organizations. Local nonprofit organizations struggle. Federal, state, and nonprofit land stewardship entities run successfully on a separate track.

Scenario B — Action Scenario
Scenario B proposes a set of initiatives that, together, would create a comprehensive National Heritage Area program within the Valley as envisioned in the heritage area’s enabling legislation. The program outlined
below is focused upon 1) developing a strong, coordinated interpretive presentation within the heritage area, 2) establishing and marketing a high quality visitor experience, 3) recognizing and supporting local cultural values and interests, and 4) providing opportunities for entrepreneurial initiatives and community enhancement. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area will be implemented through local, grassroots initiatives with regional coordination, guidance, and support. It will be managed through the cooperative efforts of a variety of local and regional entities.

Nine topics of interest are listed below drawn from the heritage area’s enabling legislation and discussions with local organizations and individuals. Concepts around which heritage area programs could be developed are noted below each topical heading. Together, they are intended to create a coordinated approach to addressing each topic in a manner appropriate to the interests, needs, and capabilities of the region, its communities, and its people.

**Interpretation and Presentation B:**

- Create a **community interpretive program** in which participating communities develop comprehensive interpretive plans to tell their own stories based on themes, structure, and standards provided by the National Heritage Area for the sake of consistency and region-wide experience [based on the feasibility study and to be further developed during the next phase of management planning with stakeholders’ participation]. Preparation and implementation of the community interpretive plans will be guided and supported by the heritage area, but developed by each individual community. Emphasize cultural and historical themes and the preservation of historic buildings and landscape features. Coordinate with local revitalization strategies, and incorporate local and regionally inspired artwork.

- Create a coordinated interpretive presentation and **tour of natural resource landscapes and sites** within the heritage area as the second critical element of the overall interpretive approach. Identify publicly accessible sites where a variety of types of interpretive media can be employed. Connect the sites with a recommended touring route with wayside exhibits strategically located at appropriate sites along the way. Provide published and media-based interpretive support materials. Develop and publicize recreational walking and hiking trails for various levels of physical abilities, including aggressive mountain hikes. Consider establishing a major visitor center(s) orienting visitors to public lands and natural resources.

- Incorporate interpretation of the **Old Spanish Trail**, along both east and west sides of the Valley, into the tours noted above. Coordinate with related national trail interpretation and programming.

- Develop **Phase 2 interpretation of Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic & Historic Byway**. Concentrate interpretation on cultural and historical themes and subjects emphasizing connections between communities. Create spur tours to other close-by communities that wish to participate. Expand the number, range, and quality of exhibits, incorporating landscaping, visitor amenities, and regionally inspired artwork.

- Create **themed itineraries** on specific interpretive subjects such as significant cultures, and birding, water resources, Pike’s exploration, etc. Develop supporting interpretive materials and media.

- Develop **audio tours and social media programs to enable landscape exploration and to bridge distances** between towns and sites; employ oral history as well as story-telling. Cooperate with existing **oral history programs** to make such productions possible and to incorporate their work into exhibits and other means of sharing with audiences.
• Develop a **living history program** with groups of actors and re-enactors who can be featured within the heritage area at events and in other ways where a critical mass of visitors can support such programming.

• Create a program to support (financially & with technical assistance) interpretive partners’ development of sites, exhibits, events, and management capacity.

**Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism B:**

• Develop a single **graphic identity, branding, and messaging** plan for the National Heritage Area which includes brand management and brand integration strategies to identify how the brand for the National Heritage Area coordinates with other existing brands in the region. A key goal of this effort will be to allow for individual identity while minimizing the potential for visitor confusion. Coordinate with other local and regional partners, including Los Caminos Antiguos. Web site, signage, published materials, and other visual forms of communication should have the same graphic identity and convey the same messages. Create a family of wayfinding signage, interpretive exhibits, and graphic formats that can be used throughout the heritage area by partners.

• Support development of a **network of wayfinding signage** using the graphic identity noted above. Identify gateway entrance points into the heritage area. Mark touring routes building upon current precedents. Develop wayfinding signage to participating sites, attractions, and communities. Support entrance signs to communities and sites that wish to utilize them.

• Establish a system of **orientation exhibits** to be installed at entrances to the heritage area and within participating communities. Exhibits should be part of the family of signage mentioned above with respect to graphic identity.

• Create a **designation program for visitor service providers and interpretive sites**. Allow participating providers and sites to display a heritage area emblem on their signage, site, and in marketing materials. Establish criteria and guidelines for participation, and create programs for their development and support, such as an annual cook-off or “best of” event or awards program. Create a hospitality program and best practices guidelines for participating providers and sites and have them meet set standards for inclusion in the SdCNHA branding/marketing program.

• Create a program of **designated visitor service communities** that wish to be marketed and promoted in heritage area forums. Establish criteria and guidelines for participation, and create programs for their development and support.

• Create and work with key tourism partners to promote tour packages that feature designated sites, services and communities to promote overnight stays within the National Heritage Area.

• Develop Phase 2 of the National Heritage Area web site to create **virtual visitation** through distant access with in-depth interpretive, cultural, and educational content. Make use of **social media, Google Earth, web-based trip planners** and other electronic applications to promote exploration.

• Develop a **family of visitor information materials** to support interpretation and visitor experience that complement existing tourism marketing materials for the region. In addition to media, include brochures, guidebooks, maps, and other materials tailored to specific audiences and uses. Include **trail guides** for back-country exploration.

• Create a program to foster, through technical and financial support, partners’ development of events, public outreach, promotions, and marketing.
Culture & Community B:

- Collaborate with and support communities and local cultural organizations in preserving their cultural values and in presenting them to residents and visitors. Provide interpretation.

- Collaborate with Adams State College and others in developing a comprehensive program of research into and preservation of cultural traditions. Support existing oral history programs and other partner programs in documenting the history and the stories of the Valley’s many cultures. Encourage and support the development of at least one repository for documents, objects, and oral histories; train sites in accessioning, cataloging, and conservation standards for their collections.

- Encourage and support the development and promotion of local arts, crafts, foods, and services related to heritage area themes as a component of preservation, interpretation, heritage tourism, and economic revitalization initiatives.

- Encourage, support, and promote cultural programming and heritage events in local communities.

- Incorporate locally created art into interpretive presentations throughout the heritage area.

Engaging our Young People B:

- Work directly with schools on educational opportunities. Review and revise the educational curriculum related to local history in the national context and existing school offerings, working with local educators. Support the addition of interpretive/heritage elements to local food-to-schools initiatives. [Board: need to find out soonest “what would it take” to make this happen?]

- Collaborate with existing interpretive sites in developing and implementing educational programming about the history and cultural of the region that supports local curriculum goals and needs.

- Collaborate with communities and organizations in developing activities and programs for local youth featuring heritage area themes.

- Encourage the training of a corps of young people to serve as tour guides for visitors to the Valley at interpretive sites, in communities, and during events.

- Encourage and help connect young people to volunteer and employment opportunities at interpretive sites, visitor service businesses, and local businesses related to the heritage area brand designation noted below.

- Support the establishment of a mentoring program combined with scholarship and/or internship opportunities.

Economic Revitalization B:

- Support economic revitalization through heritage tourism. Collaborate with state and regional organizations in state and national marketing and promotion.

- Support community enhancement and revitalization through the community interpretive presentation and designated visitor service communities programs outlined above. Hospitality training, especially, has great potential for economic impact.

- Collaborate with regional organizations in creating a San Luis Valley/Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brand designation for local products representative of local character and culture. Develop cooperative marketing for the brand designation’s affiliated products.
• Work with local communities, organizations, and individuals to support and promote entrepreneurial initiatives related to **local arts and crafts**.

• Work with local communities, organizations, and individuals to support and promote entrepreneurial initiatives related to **agri-tourism and growing and processing local foods**. (Board: “food overcomes boundaries – if you can’t speak the language, you can still eat the food.”)

**Historic Preservation B:**

• Work with the three counties and local communities to undertake a **comprehensive inventory and analysis of existing conditions** of historic resources within the heritage area. Update the existing database to serve the San Luis Valley, creating programs and incentives that promote and implement historic preservation in partnership with counties and local communities and organizations. [Board: “make it our own”]

• Develop a close working relationship with Colorado Preservation, Inc., History Colorado and the National Trust for Historic Preservation as regional partners and conduits to local communities. Working with these organizations and others, become the regional historic preservation advocate in the San Luis Valley, creating programs and incentives that promote and implement historic preservation in partnership with counties and local communities and organizations. [Board specifically requested combining two points into this single one.]

**Land Stewardship and Natural Resources B:**

• Forge close ties with land stewardship entities. **Partner with and support stewardship and land conservation initiatives** led by these organizations.

• **Build public awareness** of stewardship and conservation issues and subjects through the interpretive and educational programs outlined above as well as through marketing of the heritage area. Enable visitors and residents to understand not only the land, but human connections to nature. Seek collaborative opportunities with eco-tourism initiatives offered by organizations, clubs, and private providers.

• Feature publicly accessible lands in the interpretive programming mentioned above. Seek opportunities for **cooperative programming**.

**Outdoor Recreation B:**

• **Promote recreational opportunities and events** into the interpretive programming and materials offered through the heritage area and its partners, as outlined above.

• Coordinate with federal and state agencies managing public lands and the Adams State College outdoor recreation program on recreational opportunities and programming within the heritage area. Coordinate the heritage area’s programs with the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Great Outdoors designation of lands in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Serve as a supporting resource on developing opportunities, facilities, and best practices.

• Working with recreational clubs active in the San Luis Valley and other organizations, such as the Friends of the Great Sand Dunes National Park, develop a **corps of local guides** who can lead visitors on **backcountry hikes** and other outings of varying lengths and degrees of difficulty.

• Collaborate with local outfitters and hunting guides and the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) Watchable Wildlife programs.

• Support **development of local recreational trails**, including a more extensive trail and interpretive network on the Alamosa Ranch and the implementation of the Costilla/ Conejos County trails plan currently under development.
Organization & Management B:

- Develop a lean but vibrant organization with strong regional partnerships such that most programming can be undertaken by partners in accordance with heritage area standards and guidelines. Encourage that partners work collectively as well as individually toward heritage area goals.

- Become a regional leader with strong relationships and perceived public value Valley-wide.

- Engage in a wide variety of fundraising activities using a development plan, business plan, and annual work program led by the Board of Directors. Encourage local public investment as well as donations and grants.

- Develop a strong Board-development program that includes recruitment, training, retreats, committees and other standard practices for excellence in nonprofit administration.

- Encourage young leaders drawn from each county for participation in programmatic activities.

- Sustain a staffed organization to administer a program of partner development and capacity-building that includes technical assistance and training; networking and other relationship-building among partners; Engagement of the Board of Directors in partners’ ongoing work. Support partner development by asking that partners engage in heritage-area-wide committees focusing on such specific topics as interpretation and outdoor recreation. Encourage towns to engage the heritage area with committees that develop a direct relationship with the heritage area.

- Measure and publicly report progress toward implementation of this management plan on an annual basis.
APPENDIX C: Existing Socio-economic Conditions

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Race and Ethnicity ............................................................................................................................................... 4
Income .............................................................................................................................................................. 6
Education .......................................................................................................................................................... 8
Employment ...................................................................................................................................................... 9
Summary.......................................................................................................................................................... 13
APPENDIX C: Existing Socio-economic Conditions

The following report was prepared by Heritage Strategies, LLC, to provide basic socio-economic background information for all management planning for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

The socioeconomic environment of a given region or place describes the way in which social and economic conditions of that place combine and interact. Some factors that contribute to socioeconomic environment may be easily detected by spending time “on the ground” in a place. Others, however, are more difficult to discern through observation and are, therefore, more effectively analyzed through quantitative data.

This section presents the socioeconomic environment of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area based on quantitative data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and other governmental agencies. Data is presented in narrative, tabular, and graphic formats in order to present a brief but thorough account of the socioeconomic environment relevant to this management plan and to show the rich diversity of the region’s social and economic landscape.

Social and economic conditions presented in this memorandum include the following factors:

- Population (Population Density, Urban and Rural Populations, Population Growth)
- Race and Ethnicity
- Income (Per Capita Income, Median Household Income, Poverty and Low-Income Populations)
- Education
- Employment (Rates of Employment, Occupation, Industry)

The purpose of the socioeconomic analysis presented in this section is to provide a snapshot of the current social and economic dynamics in the heritage area. This analysis will provide the planning team with an important context in which to consider management goals and strategies. It will assist the planning team in developing appropriate policies for the management plan and provide a baseline against which policies and strategies developed in the management planning process may be measured over time.

About the Data
One of the best resources for information about population, income, employment and other aspects of the socioeconomic environment is the U.S. Census. Every ten years, the Census Bureau conducts the Decennial Census, which surveys every household in the nation. The Census Bureau also conducts the American Community Survey every three years. The American Community Survey interviews only about three million households, a fraction of the Decennial Census. The Decennial Census is useful in providing the most comprehensive data at the most detailed level, while the American Community Survey is important for providing the most recent data. Data in this section is based on both the U.S. Decennial Census (1990, 2000, 2010) and the American Community Survey (2005-2009 5-Year Estimates).

In addition to the U.S. Census, other resources have also been consulted for this section, including the State of Colorado website, which provides state-wide statistics and data related to socioeconomic conditions.

Population
Demographics encompass a study of the size, structure and distribution of a population, as well as spatial and temporal changes in it. The following analysis of population examines the size, age, and growth of the population of Colorado, generally, and the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, specifically. The section also examines urban versus rural population dynamics.
Population Size and Age

According to the U.S. Census 2000, Colorado is ranked 22nd in the nation in terms of its population with 5,029,196 people living in its 64 counties. Between 1980 and 2010, the population of Colorado has almost doubled, growing from 2.8 million residents. The majority of that growth occurred in the 1980s and 2000s when the growth rate exceeded 13 percent. Over the last decade, population has increased 16.9 percent, making it the seventh fastest growing state behind Nevada, Idaho, Texas, North Carolina, Utah, and Arizona.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, however, falls well below the average growth rate of the state, increasing less than one percent over the last decade. More than half of the population of the heritage area lies within Alamosa County, with more than 15,445 residents. Population growth within Alamosa County has risen more than three percent over the last decade, while both Costilla and Conejos County lost population. Table 1 shows the total population of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area compared to the population of Colorado and the United States between 1980 and 2010.

| Table 1: Population Change within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, 1980-2010 |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Alamosa    | 11,799     | 3.30%      | 13,617     | 15.41%     | 14,966     | 9.91%      | 15,445     | 3.2%       |
| Conejos    | 7,794      | -0.66%     | 7,453      | -4.38%     | 8,400      | 12.71%     | 8,256      | -1.71%     |
| Costilla   | 3,071      | -0.65%     | 3,190      | 3.87%      | 3,663      | 14.83%     | 3,524      | -3.79%     |
| Sangre de Cristo NHA | 22,664 | 1.27% | 24,260 | 6.58% | 27,029 | 10.24% | 27,225 | .73% |
| Colorado   | 2,889,964  | 30.9%      | 3,294,394  | 14.0%      | 4,301,261  | 30.6%      | 5,029,196  | 16.9%      |
| United States | 226,545,805 | 11.5% | 248,709,873 | 9.8% | 281,421,906 | 13.2% | 308,745,538 | 9.7% |


The largest towns and cities in the Heritage Area based on size of population are Alamosa, Manassa, Antonito, La Jara, Sanford, San Luis, and Mosca. The City of Alamosa is by far the most populated with more than 10,000 residents. Combined with Alamosa East, these two municipalities make up more than 37 percent of the heritage area’s population. Manassa is the third largest community with a little more than 1,000 residents; all others are under 1,000. Table 2 illustrates population change within the largest towns found in the Heritage Area. By comparing these numbers with population change within the counties, it is clear that the growth within Alamosa County has occurred within the city limits, whereas the rural portion of the county has lost population. Conversely, all growth within Costilla County has occurred within the rural areas. Only three communities – Alamosa, Romeo, and Sanford – have gained population over the last decade.

The U.S. Census 2000 revealed that the median age varies by almost ten years within the Heritage Area. Within Alamosa County, the median age is only 30.6, whereas in Costilla County it is 40.2 with almost 17 percent of the population over 65.
### Table 2: Population Change of Cities and Towns within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town/City</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamosa</td>
<td>7,960</td>
<td>8,780</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>10.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alamosa East</td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td>1,458</td>
<td>-70</td>
<td>-4.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonito</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>-92</td>
<td>-10.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanca</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-1.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capulin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conejos</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Garland</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooper</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>-20</td>
<td>-16.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Jara</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>-59</td>
<td>-6.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manassa</td>
<td>1,042</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>-51</td>
<td>-4.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romeo</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Acacio</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>-110</td>
<td>-14.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>7.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*"-" refers to geographies which were not recorded during the 2000 census


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**Population Density**

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area encompasses approximately 3,563 square miles. Population density within each of the three counties is relatively low, but varied. Alamosa averages 21 people per square mile. Conejos averages six people per square mile whereas Costilla County averages only three.

[http://www.sangres.com/colorado.htm](http://www.sangres.com/colorado.htm)

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**Urban and Rural Populations**

The U.S. Census Bureau uses the term “urban areas” to collectively refer to both urban clusters and urbanized areas. An urban cluster is a densely settled territory that has between 2,500 and 50,000 people. An urbanized area is an area consisting of a central place(s) and adjacent territory with a general population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile of land area that together has a minimum residential population of at least 50,000 people. The Census Bureau uses the term “rural area” to describe population and housing units not classified as urban. Based on this definition most of the Heritage Area is considered rural, with the only urban area being the City of Alamosa.

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**Race and Ethnicity**

The Census Bureau collects race and Hispanic origin information following the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) standards for collecting and tabulating data on race and ethnicity. In October 1997, the OMB issued the current standards, which identify five race groups: white, black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The Census Bureau also utilized a sixth category - "some other race." Respondents who reported only one race are shown in these six groups.
Table 3: Race and Ethnicity in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alamosa</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
<td>SdCNHA total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White non-Hispanic</td>
<td>8,139</td>
<td>3,266</td>
<td>1,027</td>
<td>12,432 46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>103 0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>311 1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>164 0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23 0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Other Race*</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29 0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>311 1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>6,222</td>
<td>4,965</td>
<td>2,469</td>
<td>13,656 50.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census.

Individuals were first presented with the option to self-identify with more than one race in the 2000 Census, and this continued in the 2010 Census. People who identify with more than one race may choose to provide multiple races in response to the race question. The 2010 Census results provide new data on the size and makeup of the nation’s multiracial population.

Respondents who reported more than one of the six race groups are included in the "two or more races" population. There are 57 possible combinations of the six race groups. The Census Bureau included the "some other race" category for responses that could not be classified in any of the other race categories on the questionnaire. In the 2000 Census, the vast majority of people who reported only as "some other race" were of Hispanic or Latino origin. Data on Hispanics or Latinos, who may be of any race, were obtained from a separate question on ethnicity.

Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, approximately 52 percent of the population identifies itself as Hispanic or Latino, whereas approximately 45 percent identifies itself as White, non-Hispanic. Over the last decade, there has been a slight (one percent) increase in the Hispanic population that corresponds with the same percentage drop in the White population. All other races account for less than four percent of the population of the Heritage Area. Compared to Colorado as a whole, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s total Hispanic population is more than double the state average of 20.6 percent.
At the county scale, Alamosa’s Hispanic or Latino population accounts for 46 percent of the total, whereas in Conejos and Costilla Counties it is 56 percent and 66 percent respectively. In the 2000 Census, approximately 30 percent of those who identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino consider themselves to be of Mexican origin, with Alamosa having the highest percentage (37 percent). Spanish/Spaniard and Spanish-American origins account for an average of more than 18 percent throughout the heritage area, with Costilla County being the highest in this category at 23 percent. The 2010 Census statistics for these categories were not yet available.

**Income**

Statistics related to income, such as Per Capita Income, Median Household Income, and Poverty, can serve as indicators for the overall economic health of a geographic region. The following analysis examines these three indicators and their implications for the heritage area.

*Per Capita Income*

Per capita personal income is a measure of the average income for every person in a community or geographic area and is calculated by dividing total personal income for an area by the population of that area. Table 4 illustrates that the per capita income for Colorado has consistently been slightly higher than that of the United States overall, both in 1999 and 2009, whereas the per capita income for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is significantly lower (59 percent of the state average), with Costilla County being the lowest overall. The disparity is even greater when looking at per capita income by race, which illustrates that Hispanics and Latino income is less than half of both the national and statewide averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th>SdCNHA (average)</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>15,037</td>
<td>12,050</td>
<td>10,748</td>
<td>13,278</td>
<td>24,049</td>
<td>21,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>17,798</td>
<td>16,668</td>
<td>16,148</td>
<td>17,541</td>
<td>29,679</td>
<td>27,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 White, not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>22,110</td>
<td>19,512</td>
<td>18,063</td>
<td>19,895</td>
<td>34,700</td>
<td>31,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>14,051</td>
<td>14,334</td>
<td>12,003</td>
<td>13,463</td>
<td>15,122</td>
<td>15,505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

*Median Household Income*

Median household income is the income level at which half of an area’s households earn more than the median figure and half of the area’s households earn less than the figure. Statistically, the measure of median income is different than an average (or per capita) income because an extremely high or extremely low value does not dramatically alter the median.

Similar to patterns of per capita income, median household income in Colorado has been slightly higher than that of the United States over the past two decades. However, the Heritage Area as a whole has a median household income that is slightly more than half of the state’s median. Table 5 illustrates this
Table 5: Median Household Income of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area 1999-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th>SdCNHA (average)</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>29,447</td>
<td>24,744</td>
<td>19,531</td>
<td>24,574</td>
<td>47,203</td>
<td>41,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>32,362</td>
<td>33,141</td>
<td>23,041</td>
<td>29,515</td>
<td>56,222</td>
<td>51,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 White, not Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>$33,301</td>
<td>$31,610</td>
<td>$23,750</td>
<td>$29,554</td>
<td>$50,546</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>$24,971</td>
<td>$21,034</td>
<td>$17,976</td>
<td>$21,327</td>
<td>$34,740</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 6: Rates of Poverty for Individuals and Families in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area 1999-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Change</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>-3.9%</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>-2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Change</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
<td>-1.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

disparity. Within the heritage area itself, that Alamosa County has the highest median household income, whereas Costilla County has the lowest. As with per capita income, Hispanic and Latinos have a significantly lower median household income (almost 30 percent less) than whites.

The region also has a lower percentage of households with earned income, as compared to the state, and a higher percentage dependent on Social Security sources and public assistance. The amount of disposable income left after providing for basic living needs such as housing, food, health, transportation, and other necessities is extremely limited.
Poverty and Low-income Populations

Statistics related to poverty are often used to compare economic health among nations, states, and communities. The poverty threshold, or poverty line, is considered to be the level of income below which a person or family lacks adequate subsistence and defined as the money income level that is three times higher than a basic food budget. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty threshold for a family of four in 2009 was $22,050 in annual income, whereas in 1999 it was $17,029. The poverty rates shown below represent the percent of the overall population that lives below the poverty threshold for that year.

Table 6 shows that between 1999 and 2000, the poverty rate for both families and individuals was much higher within the heritage area than within the state and nation as a whole. Families with a female householder and those with children go even higher. It is interesting to note that the poverty rate for both individuals and families has grown in Alamosa County to make it the county with highest poverty rates within the heritage area, even though that county maintains the highest per capita income. This suggests that differences in income are great among county residents. It is also interesting to note that poverty rates in Conejos and Costilla Counties actually dropped slightly over that same time period. It is possible that the 2009 statistics may have been influenced by sampling variability, although the Alamosa County increases are beyond the margin of error of 3.9 percent for individuals. The Conejos and Costilla County decreases are very close to or within the margin of error, 3.3 percent and 4.8 percent respectively. 


Education

Level of educational attainment can serve as an indicator for the nature and quality of a region’s labor force. Often, a correlation exists between educational attainment and income within a given region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Educational Attainment for the Population 25 Years and Over in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area 2000-2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 25 Years and Older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS or Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS or Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2009</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 25 Years and Older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS or Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BS or Higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. While 2010 data exists for state and national statistics, it is not yet available at the county level.
Employment
Table 7 indicates that between 2000 and 2009, the level of educational attainment in Colorado was higher than that of the United States overall. Over the same time horizon, educational attainment in both the state and the nation increased. Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, Alamosa County comes close to meeting the national averages. Both Conejos and Costilla Counties are well below the state and national averages in both high school and college educational attainment, although there has been a significant rise over the last decade (8 percent and 6 percent rise respectively) in the population receiving a high school degree or higher. Less progress has been made in the population of those counties receiving a bachelor’s degree or higher (3 percent and 4 percent rise respectively) and both county percentages are less than half of the state average of 35 percent.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data regarding employment levels, occupation, and industry.

Because the most recent year for which this particular Census data is available is 2009, the statistics do not fully reflect the drastic economic changes that have resulted from the recent recession. As such, 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics data augment the unemployment rates to provide a more current comparison for some statistics.

Employment status indicates how much of the population is employed. The civilian labor force comprises all civilians 16 years of age. Employed persons are defined as all civilians who work as paid employees, in their own business, profession, or on their own farm, or who worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers in an enterprise operated by a member of the family. People who are not in the labor force are considered to be those who have no job and are not looking for one – such as full time students or retirees, or those who have family responsibilities that keep them from working.

Employment Status
Table 10 shows that the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as a whole has much less of its population in the civilian and military labor forces the state and national averages. These statistics have not changed significantly over the last decade, except in Conejos County, where the percentage of the population in the labor force has grown more than 5 percent. In Costilla County, the majority of the population 16 years and older (54.4 percent) are not in the labor force. Only Alamosa County’s unemployment rate is lower than the current national average of 8.8 percent.

Occupation
The U.S. Census Bureau defines occupation as the type of work a person does on the job and provides a rough indicator of the types of jobs available within the economy. Table 9 shows the types of occupations held by the employed labor force of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. In general, the heritage area reflects the occupational profile of Colorado and the United States as a whole, where management, professional, or related occupations, and sales and office occupations make up the greatest percent of the workforce. It is notable, however, that in Costilla County the construction, extraction, maintenance, repair, production, and transportation occupations make up a much higher percentage (6 to 7 percent) of the population’s workforce than both the state and national averages. In all three counties of the heritage area, farming is approximately 3 to 4 percent higher than the state and nation as a whole.

Class of Worker
As indicated in Table 10, self-employed (10.5 percent) and government workers (26.5 percent) make up greater shares of the heritage area’s employed labor force, compared with only 7.3 percent and 14 percent in Colorado. Wage and salary jobs usually providing higher wages and benefits are in short supply (62.8 percent), compared to Colorado’s (78.5 percent).
Table 8: Employment Status of Population 16 years and older in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area 2000-2009*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Labor Force</td>
<td>66.3%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in Labor Force</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2009</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Labor Force</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate*</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.7%</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in Labor Force</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>39.8%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Because the most recent year for which this Census data is available is 2009, the statistics do not fully reflect the drastic economic changes that have resulted from the recent recession. As such, Feb/March 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics data is provided here to provide the most recent unemployment rates.

Table 9: Occupation (% of Employed Population) in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, 2009  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management, professional, and related</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and office</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, fishing, and forestry</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation, and material moving</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009
Table 10: Class of Worker (Civilian Population 16 years or Older) in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Worker</th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th>SdCNHA</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian employed population 16 years and over</td>
<td>6,531</td>
<td>3,324</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>10,984</td>
<td>2,454,468</td>
<td>141,303,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private wage and salary workers</td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>62.8%</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government workers</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed in own not incorporated business workers</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaid family workers</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. While 2010 data exists for state and national statistics, it is not yet available at the county level.

Table 11: Industry (% of Employed Population) in Colorado and the U.S., 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th>SdCNHA</th>
<th>Colorado</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale trade</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation and warehousing, and utilities</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and insurance, and real estate</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, scientific, and management</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational services, and health care and social assistance</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation, and food services</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services, except public administration</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Industries

Table 11 shows the types of industries in which the employed labor force of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is involved, as it compares to the profile of Colorado and the nation as a whole. The U.S. Census Bureau defines industry as being the kind of business conducted by a person's employing organization. The largest industry within the heritage area as a whole, in terms of percent of population employed, is the educational services, health care and social assistance industry which employs 26 percent of the work force. Retail trade and agriculture are the second and third largest industries with 13.3 percent and 8.1 percent of the employed population, respectively. Together, these three industries account for nearly half (47.5 percent) of the employed work force in the heritage area. In Costilla County, the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industry employs a substantial portion (11.1 percent) of the population, and is almost equal with the county’s agriculture industry.

Employers within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

When considering where income is being generated within the heritage area it is important to also consider the types of business establishments that employ the workers. As noted in Table 10, almost 90 percent of the employed workforce is wage and salary employees or government workers. Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage area, the largest employers are found within the City of Alamosa, with the San Luis Valley Medical Center being the largest (see Table 12).

Nonemployers, or persons in business for themselves only with no paid employees, make up slightly more than 10 percent of workers within the heritage area. In some cases, this may be the main source of employment. For persons who hold other jobs, non employer activities may be performed on a part-time basis, such as cosmetic sales, carpentry, or accounting.

The 2007 Economic Census data does not provide non-employer income for all industries. However, research conducted on behalf of the 2007 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy noted several key non-employer income sources within the greater San Luis Valley that were documented in 1999. These included construction contractor specialties; jewelry wholesaling; independent truckers; real estate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 12: Top Employers within the Heritage Area, 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Valley Medical Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams State College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakhra Mushroom Farm Corp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conejos County Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monte Vista Coop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

agents; professional & technical businesses; health care professionals; independent artists; auto and other repair services; and beauty shops. http://www.slvdrg.org/ceds/CEDS2007/D.%202007%20Labor,%20Employment,%20and%20Wages.pdf

The 2007 Economic Census data indicates that (for the industries reported), nonemployer receipts generated $28.7 million in revenue for the heritage area, with retail trade and other services being the highest.

**Summary**

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has a population of approximately 27,225 people, and has grown less than one percent over the past decade. While much of the population growth over the last decade has occurred within Alamosa’s city limits, the rest has occurred primarily in unincorporated areas. The heritage area, which comprises more than 3,245 square miles, is predominantly rural, with Alamosa and Alamosa East serving as home to more than 37 percent of the population. Another 21 percent of the heritage area lives in small communities of less than 1,000 people. With a few exceptions, these small communities are declining in population. The average population density of the heritage area is 8 people per square mile, but without factoring in the City of Alamosa, the population density of the rest of the heritage area is approximately half that.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is an economically disadvantaged region. As part of the greater San Luis Valley region, it consistently ranks lowest in state income. The average per capita income in 2009 (latest available) was $17,541, which is more than 40 percent lower than the U.S. average. All counties in the region had per capita income levels below both the Colorado and U.S. average. Incomes among the Hispanic and Latino populations, which comprise 52 percent of the population, are even lower. The heritage area’s median household income of $29,515 is also more than 40 percent less than the U.S. average. Because of these lower incomes, poverty rates for both families and individuals within the heritage area are approximately twice the national average.

The heritage area’s population (over the age of 25) is also less educated than the state and nation as a whole. Only 79 percent of the population has completed high school, which is 10 percent less than the state population and 6 percent less than the national population. This disparity among the population receiving a college degree (20 percent) is even greater, as this is 15 percent and 8 percent less than the state and national population, respectively. Overall, however, the level of education has been on the rise, reflecting the national trend.

The heritage area has suffered job losses as a result of the recent recession, but the unemployment rate has actually decreased slightly over the last decade. Top industry sectors for jobs in the heritage area are educational, health care, social services, retail trade, and agriculture. The San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center, a full service acute-care hospital and specialty physician clinic, is the largest employer in the heritage area with more than 500 employees. The top five employers are all located in Alamosa.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 NAICS code</th>
<th>Industry description</th>
<th>Alamosa</th>
<th></th>
<th>Conejos</th>
<th></th>
<th>Costilla</th>
<th></th>
<th>SdCNHA</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>44-45</td>
<td>Retail trade</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>2,710</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>1,850</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2,178</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>6,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Real estate and rental and leasing</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>4,573</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Professional, scientific, and technical services</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>2,270</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>3,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Administrative and Support and Waste Mgmt</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Educational services</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Health care and social assistance</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>2,314</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Arts, entertainment, and recreation</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3,165</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Accommodation and food services</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Other services (except public administration)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>4,763</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>2,723</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>8,113</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2007 Economic Census
D: Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual companies; data are included in higher level totals.
N: Not available or not comparable.
APPENDIX D: Existing Conditions – Tourism

National Trends in Heritage Tourism

Tourism in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
  Visitor Profile
  Attractions
  Visitor Centers
  Tourism Opportunities
  Tourism Challenges
  Tourism Marketing
  Branding

Proposed Sangre de Cristo Heritage Centers
  Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center/San Luis Cultural Center
  Gateway Heritage Center
  Antonito Depot

Figure 1: Other Destinations Visited by Great Sand Dunes Visitors
APPENDIX D: Existing Conditions – Tourism

The following report was prepared by Amy Jordan Webb of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Heritage Tourism Program, experts in the enhancement and management of small downtowns and commercial areas, to report on existing conditions, issues, and community interests in tourism in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. This investigation was completed early in the management planning process, in June 2011, and has provided background for the planning for heritage tourism, interpretation, and historic preservation described in the management plan.

National Trends in Heritage Tourism

In 2009, travel and tourism directly contributed $704.4 billion to the U.S. economy. Travel and tourism is one of America’s largest employers, directly employing more than 7.4 million people and creating a payroll income of $186.3 billion, and $113 billion in tax revenues for federal, state and local governments. (Source: U. S. Travel Association, 2010)

In addition to creating new jobs, new business and higher property values, well-managed tourism improves the quality of life and builds community pride. According to a 2009 national research study on U.S. Cultural and Heritage Travel by Mandela Research, 78 percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling translating to 118.3 million adults each year. Cultural and heritage visitors spend, on average, $994 per trip compared to $611 for all U.S. travelers. (Source: Cultural & Heritage Traveler Study, Mandela Research, LLC) Perhaps the biggest benefits of cultural heritage tourism, though, are diversification of local economies and preservation of a community’s unique character.

The Cultural & Heritage Traveler Study also identified activities of interest to cultural and heritage travelers. This study reconfirmed the findings of earlier national studies for this market segment, emphasizing that cultural heritage travelers are seeking a well-rounded visitor experience offering a variety of options and opportunities. Specifically, the study found that among cultural heritage travelers:

- 40% experienced local cuisine
- 39% visited historic sites
- 39% explored small towns
- 38% visited state/national parks
- 34% took a self-guided walking tour
- 33% visited historic buildings
- 32% shopped for local arts and crafts
- 31% visited history museums/centers
- 28% visited arts museums/galleries
- 25% visited natural history museums/centers

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines cultural heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.” The National Trust’s Heritage Tourism Program has also developed five guiding principles for successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism programs, including efforts such as National Heritage Areas. These principles include:

- **Collaborate.** The value of the collective National Heritage Area is greater than the sum of its parts. By working together in partnership towards shared goals that benefit everyone, much more can be accomplished than by working alone.
• **Make Sites and Programs Come Alive.** Cultural heritage travelers have higher expectations, and it is vital that the visitor experiences offered to these travelers are exciting and engaging so they stay longer, plan return visits, and encourage others to visit the area.

• **Focus on Authenticity and Quality.** Cultural heritage travelers have higher expectations when they travel, and they are looking for high quality, authentic experiences that reflect the unique heritage of the region.

• **Find the Fit Between the Community and Tourism.** A good cultural heritage tourism effort makes the destination a better place to live as well as a better place to visit.

• **Preserve and Protect Resources.** The natural, historic and cultural resources that led to the designation of this region as the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area are irreplaceable treasures. If lost, they can never be replaced. Preservation and conservation of valued historic, cultural and natural resources should be a core ethic for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

**Tourism in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area**

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area includes three counties (Alamosa, Conejos and Costilla) in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. The majority of the visitor services for the region (lodging, restaurants and retail) are clustered in Alamosa. While this creates opportunities for hub-and-spoke experiences throughout the San Luis Valley using Alamosa as a base, it also means that Alamosa captures the lion’s share of the economic impact of tourism for the region.

**Visitor Profile**

According to the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau, the top five states of origination for travel to the San Luis Valley in 2010 were (in order of popularity): Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas. In 2010, the Colorado Welcome Center had visitors from 44 different countries, and the top five countries of origin were Germany, England, Canada, France and Switzerland.

Great Sand Dunes completed their most recent visitor study in 2003 (Figure 1). This study identified the top U.S. states of origin as Colorado (38%), Texas (13%), California (5%) and New Mexico (4%). The Great Sand Dunes Visitor Study found that 4 percent of their visitors in 2002 were international, with Germany, Holland and England being the most popular states of origin.

As part of the Great Sand Dunes Visitor Study, visitors were asked to identify other locations visited as part of their trip. This information indicates that the vast majority of visitors are traveling to other National Parks. While the other destinations visited do not specify the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (it was not yet in existence in 2002), the information about cross-over visitation to other attractions within the Sangre de Cristo NHA will provide good baseline data to measure the impact of the National Heritage Area over time.

**Attractions**

The biggest tourism draw in the region is Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. In addition to other popular public lands, another draw is the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad which travels between Chama, New Mexico and Antonito, Colorado. As the Cumbres & Toltec depot is located a half mile south of Antonito, Antonito’s downtown has not benefitted from the scenic railroad passengers to the same extent that Chama’s downtown has.
**Figure 1: Other Destinations Visited by Great Sand Dunes Visitors**

- **National Parks (52%)**
- **Zapata Falls (21%)**
- **Alligator Farm (17%)**
- **Area Hot Springs (16%)**
- **San Luis Lake State Park (11%)**
- **Fort Garland Museum (7%)**
- **Area Historical Museums (6%)**
- **Sangre de Cristo trailheads (5%)**
- **Stations of the Cross (5%)**
- **Alamosa/Monte Vista Wildlife Refuges (5%)**
- **Cumbres & Toltec Railroad (5%)**
- **Los Caminos Antiguos (1%)**
- **Medano Zapata Ranch (1%)**
- **Other (16%)**
Table 1: Annual Visitation at Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Attractions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Annual Visitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve</td>
<td>Mosca</td>
<td>270,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbres &amp; Toltec Railroad</td>
<td>Antonito</td>
<td>38,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Welcome Center</td>
<td>Alamosa</td>
<td>37,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Railroad</td>
<td>Alamosa</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monte Vista Wildlife Refuge</td>
<td>Monte Vista</td>
<td>22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Garland Museum</td>
<td>Fort Garland</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer Days (event)</td>
<td>Manassa</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santana Festival (event)</td>
<td>San Luis</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Valley Museum</td>
<td>Alamosa</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luther Bean Museum</td>
<td>Alamosa</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Dempsey Museum</td>
<td>Manassa</td>
<td>1,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pike Stockade</td>
<td>Sanford</td>
<td>&lt;500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visitor Centers
The primary welcome center for the region is the Colorado Welcome Center located in a historic depot in downtown Alamosa. The Colorado Welcome Center has 27 volunteers who help staff the center. The Entrada Visitor Center in Fort Garland is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, seven days a week from 10-4. The center, which opened in 2004, is staffed by volunteers. San Luis also has a storefront visitor center on the main road through town which is staffed seasonally by volunteers.

Table 2: Distance to Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area from Metropolitan Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Travel Time to Sangre de Cristo NHA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
<td>600,100</td>
<td>3 hours 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albuquerque, NM</td>
<td>528,497</td>
<td>3 hours 45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado Springs, CO</td>
<td>399,827</td>
<td>2 hours 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tourism Opportunities
- Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is included within the boundaries of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. This popular destination attracts an estimated 270,000 visitors annually, and there may be opportunities to encourage those travelers to extend their stay to experience the heritage area as well.
- Another major tourism attraction in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. The Cumbres & Toltec travels between Chama, New Mexico and Antonito, Colorado and carries and estimated 38,000 passengers each year.
- The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area also has undeveloped tourism development opportunities in the areas of agritourism and religious tourism.
- The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is within driving distance of several metropolitan areas (Table 2)
- Travelers pass through the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area on their way to other major destinations. For example, one of the fastest routes from the Denver area to Taos, NM passes through Fort Garland and San Luis. One of the routes from the Denver area to Mesa Verde National Park passes through Fort Garland and Alamosa.
Tourism Challenges

- The National Heritage Area encompasses a large geographic area with considerable distance between attractions and even between communities. This necessitates factoring in additional time just to get from place to place within the region.
- While the region has a rich heritage, many of the region’s important stories are not easy for travelers to discern as they pass through.
- There are a number of historic churches in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. Some of these sacred treasures are off on unmarked side roads, and many are not staffed or open on a regular basis. While there are efforts to create opportunities for groups to experience these sacred sites, they are less accessible for independent travelers (who make up the bulk of the travel market). Actively promoting these churches could potentially put them at risk for vandalism.
- Conejos and Costilla counties are two of the poorest counties in Colorado, and economic resources are scarce in this region overall.
- There is a history of competition rather than collaboration between the three counties in the National Heritage Area. Stakeholders have indicated that there is a sense that Alamosa County has greater resources and tends to benefit the most when new regional initiatives are launched.

Tourism Marketing

The largest tourism organization in the San Luis Valley is the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau. The Alamosa CVB has three staff members, an annual budget of $350,000 and an active corps of volunteers. Funding for the CVB comes from a 1.9 percent lodging tax and a 4 percent market district tax on lodging in Alamosa County. The Alamosa CVB maintains a website at www.alamosa.org, manages social media for Alamosa (Facebook, Flickr and Twitter) and produces an annual four-color Alamosa Visitor Guide. 50,000 copies of the Visitor Guide were printed and distributed in 2010. The 2011 Alamosa Visitor Guide includes a two-page four-color spread devoted to the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. The Visitor Guide includes attractions throughout the entire San Luis Valley and lodging facilities in Alamosa County, promoting Alamosa as an overnight “hub” for a variety of experiences throughout the entire San Luis Valley. One of the three Alamosa CVB staff manages the Colorado Welcome Center. The Welcome Center is housed in Alamosa’s historic depot building, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Alamosa County Events & Facilities Marketing District has an Event Grant Program that provides funds for events that demonstrate that they will help fill hotel rooms and have an economic impact on Alamosa County.

Conejos and Costilla Counties also have a county lodging tax, though revenues generate more modest income than the lodging tax in Alamosa County. Conejos County has expanded their lodging tax board into a tourism council. The Conejos County Tourism Council uses their lodging tax for targeted advertising, a website (www.conejosvacation.com), a Conejos County tourism brochure as well as other projects such as a self-guided tour of Conejos County murals and small grants. The Conejos County Tourism Council has a part-time contract staff person who manages the Tourism Council and oversees the development of an annual marketing plan. Many of Conejos County’s tourism marketing efforts focus on the county as a destination for outdoor recreation in the San Juan wilderness, including the Gold Medal waters for catch and release fishing as well as access to several of Colorado’s “fourteens,” or mountain peaks of 14,000 feet or higher, for hiking and fishing enthusiasts. Costilla County also generates several thousand dollars in lodging taxes each year. Lodging tax funds are given out as mini grants to support tourism related projects such as the Entrada Visitor Center or one of the festivals in Costilla County.

A regional tourism marketing organization, the San Luis Valley Tourism Association (SLVTA), was formed in 2009 to help promote tourism for the entire San Luis Valley. SLVTA is a membership based organization that also offers members fee-based marketing opportunities. The organization serves all six counties in the San Luis Valley, and the organization produced a San Luis Valley heritage brochure, a region-wide visitor guide, has sponsored an annual tourism conference for the past two years, and manages a website at www.slvheritage.org that includes attractions listed in the Colorado Heritage Tourism Database. Due to the cost of producing the visitor guide and concern about
duplicating other visitor guides such as the Alamosa visitor guide, SLVTA may not produce another visitor guide in 2011.

While SLVTA is only a few years old, this organization is the most recent iteration of a regional tourism organization for the San Luis Valley. In the 1990s [?] a six-county organization called Valley Six was created. The six counties pooled lodging tax revenues and the organization provided advertising, printed collateral materials and other marketing for the six counties. Some years later, Valley Six was disbanded when the San Luis Valley Information Center was created by government entities in the valley. These government entities, including the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and others, had visitor information to share but didn’t have a place to share it. Using funds from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, an information center was built in Monte Vista. While the San Luis Valley Information Center did get some lodging tax revenues from the six counties, many of the counties began to keep a greater share of the lodging tax to market each county. In the early 2000s as it became increasingly difficult to raise the operating funds required to keep the San Luis Valley Information Center open, the center was closed.

A few years after the San Luis Valley Information Center was disbanded, the San Luis Valley was selected by the Colorado Tourism Office as a pilot heritage tourism region for a three-year initiative (2007-2009). The pilot region was originally led by the director of the Alamosa CVB. Selection as a pilot region included funding to create a heritage brochure, a heritage tourism website for the San Luis Valley, themed itineraries, and funds to add heritage sites in the San Luis Valley to a statewide online Colorado Heritage Tourism Database. Sites in the database feed the San Luis Valley website (www.slvheritage.com) as well as the state’s tourism website at www.colorado.com. In 2009, the then director of the Alamosa CVB and lead contact for the San Luis Valley heritage tourism pilot region left the Alamosa CVB and created the San Luis Valley Tourism Association.

The Colorado Heritage Tourism Database currently includes detailed information for 61 sites in the six-county San Luis Valley, 29 of which are in the three-county Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (see Table 3). The database also includes detailed information about the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge in Rio Grande County.

| Table 3: Heritage Sites in the Colorado Heritage Tourism Database in Alamosa, Conejos and Costilla Counties as of June 2011 |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Attraction                      | County        |
| Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge| Alamosa       |
| Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area (Blanca Wetlands) | Alamosa |
| Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Locomotive No. 169 | Alamosa |
| Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve | Alamosa |
| Historic Downtown Alamosa Walking Tour | Alamosa |
| La Sierra Blanca | Alamosa |
| Luther Bean Museum | Alamosa |
| Montville Nature Trail and Mosca Pass Trail | Alamosa |
| Rio Grande Scenic Railroad | Alamosa |
| San Luis Lakes State Park | Alamosa |
| San Luis Valley Museum | Alamosa |
| Zapata Falls Recreation Area | Alamosa |
| Conejos Plaza | Conejos |
| Cumbres Pass | Conejos |
| Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad | Conejos |
Table 3: Heritage Sites in the Colorado Heritage Tourism Database in Alamosa, Conejos and Costilla Counties as of June 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage Site</th>
<th>County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denver &amp; Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Antonito: Architecture and Murals</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Dempsey Museum and Park</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Lady of Guadalupe Church</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pike’s Stockade</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande: Vargas Crossing</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPMDTU: Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos</td>
<td>Conejos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Garland Museum</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Vega</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic &amp; Historic Byway</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Acacio Mission Church</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Museum and Cultural Center</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis People’s Ditch</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrine of the Stations of the Cross</td>
<td>Costilla</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A grant proposal was submitted to the National Scenic Byways Program by the Colorado Tourism Office in the summer of 2011 that, if funded, would provide funds to add any missing heritage sites along the Los Caminos Antiguos Byway to the Colorado Heritage Tourism Database. The grant would also provide funding to create an Online Wayfinding Tool to let travelers create customized maps and travel itineraries for each of Colorado’s 25 byways including Los Caminos Antiguos. It is anticipated that National Scenic Byway grant announcements will be made in late October 2011.

Branding

There are several overlapping tourism brands in this region. The six-county region has an identity as the San Luis Valley, though some local stakeholders argue that Great Sand Dunes or Alamosa may be better known than the San Luis Valley. For example, the 2011 Official Visitors Guide for Alamosa uses the tag line “Great Sand Dunes Country” as a hook at the top of the cover page along with “Discover Alamosa.” Within this six county region is the three-county area including Alamosa, Conejos and Costilla counties which includes the Los Caminos Antiguos byway corridor as well as the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. The Los Caminos Antiguos Byway (translated as “the ancient roads” to reflect the northernmost end of the Spanish territorial expansion in the 16th century) has existed for a number of years as part of Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways program through the Colorado Department of Transportation. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area was officially designated in 2009, making it the most recent designation for this three-county region. Los Caminos Antiguos currently exists within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s organizational structure with a separate board, an arrangement which should allow for good coordination of efforts in the future.

As tourism marketing efforts go forward, it will be important to consider these different existing and overlapping identities for this region. This is important both in terms of avoiding duplication of efforts in creating marketing materials, and also in terms of avoiding confusion on the part of visitors about the identity for this region. Local stakeholders have already cited overlap in the visitor guides produced by the Alamosa CVB and the San Luis Valley Tourism Association as one example, and the similar brochures produced by the Los Caminos Antiguos Byway and the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as another example of overlap and duplication.
Proposed Sangre de Cristo Heritage Centers
In addition to the existing Colorado Welcome Center in Alamosa, the visitor center at Great Sand Dunes and volunteer-run visitor centers in Fort Garland and San Luis, plans have been discussed for more substantial welcome centers as part of the National Heritage Area effort. The National Park Service led Community Scoping Meetings held in 2010 indicated a strong interest across the heritage area in creating a network of heritage centers using existing museums, welcome centers and public buildings as well as developing new dedicated heritage centers. Follow up interviews in 2011 indicated progress in developing several new heritage centers, including:

Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center/San Luis Cultural Center
In Costilla County, the all volunteer Costilla County Economic Development Council is heading up efforts to restore the 1930s San Luis Cultural Center in downtown San Luis. The vision is to restore this Works Progress Administration building as the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center to serve all three counties. The 20,000 square foot building originally served as a high school, and has additions from the 1950s as well as solar additions from the 1980s. 15,000 square feet of the building houses a museum (now closed) as well as a small auditorium space and two good sized meeting rooms, one equipped with a private courtyard and a kitchen. Exhibits in the now-closed museum include a “morada room” with a room set up to feel like the interior of a morada, a diorama to depict San Luis’ early days, various historical exhibits and other collections.

Funding for the first phase of exterior renovation for the building has been secured from a Colorado State Historic Fund grant, funds from the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and other sources. A second grant to the Colorado State Historic Fund is pending to help cover the cost of repairing and replacing internal systems such as heating, electric, lighting, floors, plumbing and an elevator. The project still needs a business plan to look at operations and sustainability for the facility once the renovation work is complete, as well as funding for an additional phase of repairs for the courtyard area.

The Costilla County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) has also developed plans to create a Sacred Circle tour, featuring a guided tour of 8 mission churches in Costilla County. While original plans to work with San Luis Valley Transit to secure small 15 passenger vans for the Sacred Circle tours fell through, Costilla County Economic Development has offered step-on guide services for several tour groups in recent years. Discussions about the viability of a small convention center for 100-200 people have also been explored, with an emphasis on religious retreats to tie into the Stations of the Cross in San Luis. There are several annual events held in Costilla County, the biggest of which is Santana in July, which attracts an estimated 2,000 people. This event serves as a homecoming for people with family ties to San Luis. While this event has been successful, it is often not organized until the last minute and the capacity to plan and implement events in the county is currently very limited.

There are other Costilla County events which could be expanded to maximize their tourism potential, including the Pastores and Posades that take place around the Christmas holidays, the Harvest Festival that used to be run by the Rio Culebra Agricultural Collaborative and is now defunct, an expanded version of Studio Tours which currently feature artists in southern Costilla County, bringing back the Oktoberfest which used to be held in the county, and considering new events such as the “Sabor de San Luis” with a focus on local restaurants or a religious themed event around Lent.

Gateway Heritage Center
In addition to the proposed Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center in San Luis, local stakeholders are exploring possibilities to create a Gateway Heritage Center in Conejos County. Several sites in Conejos County are currently being considered as potential locations for this center. The Center would include an archive for artifacts, a large assembly room for political speakers, visitor orientation, and possibly another compatible business use.

Antonito Depot
Local stakeholders are also exploring opportunities to restore and reuse the historic Antonito Depot in downtown Antonito. The Depot has been listed on Colorado Preservation Inc.’s list of Colorado’s Most Endangered Places and...
has been empty for many years. A grant has been secured from the Colorado State Historic Fund to complete an interior restoration, and an additional grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation has been secured to restore the exterior. As an additional challenge, the depot is located in the middle of several active rail lines, creating access challenges that could impact proposed uses.

No formal operations or business plan has been developed for the adaptive reuse of the Antonito Depot, though possible uses under discussion have included a heritage center for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area or an auxiliary depot for the Cumbres & Toltec and the Rio Grande Scenic Railroads. Although the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad terminates just a half mile south, extending the narrow gauge tracks to the Antonito Depot would entail expensive compliance measures because the narrow gauge rail line would then be connected to the standard gauge rail line.
APPENDIX E: Existing Conditions – Downtown San Luis, Antonito and Alamosa

The Role of Downtowns in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Downtown San Luis
  Background
  Opportunities and Assets
  Challenges
  Town of San Luis Demographic Summary

Downtown Antonito
  Background
  Opportunities and Assets
  Challenges
  Town of Antonito Demographic Summary

Alamosa
  Background
  Opportunities and Assets
  Challenges
  Town of Alamosa Demographic Summary

Business & Property Owner Outreach: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Areas for Downtown Improvement

Existing Characteristics, Downtown San Luis, Antonito, and Alamosa

Sample Organizational and Financing Strategies for Downtown San Luis, Antonito, and Alamosa
APPENDIX E: Existing Conditions —
Downtown San Luis, Antonito and Alamosa

The following report was prepared by the consulting firm P.U.M.A., experts in the enhancement and management of small downtowns and commercial areas, to report on existing conditions, issues, and community interests in the downtown areas of the three county seats serving the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. This investigation was completed early in the management planning process, in June 2011, and has provided background for the planning for community commercial areas, historic preservation, and heritage tourism described in the management plan.

The Role of Downtowns in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

The three county-seat downtowns located in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (SdCNHA) – San Luis, Antonito and Alamosa – will all play a critical role in providing both the organizational and economic framework to support the National Heritage Area. Conversely, the SdCNHA is poised to provide a boost to the long-term economic sustainability of the three downtowns. This unique relationship requires a reciprocal collaboration for each to achieve long-term economic health, growth and sustainability.

Each of the downtowns provides a unique and complementary contribution to the SdCNHA: San Luis has a rich agricultural, communal, and spiritual history; Antonito has access to historic train journeys, outstanding recreational opportunities and cultural diversity; and Alamosa’s history and beauty are augmented by the town’s access to Valley-wide economic resources, commerce, lodging and amenities.

In order to fully realize the enhanced visitation and related economic opportunities that could be catalyzed by the SdCNHA, each downtown has an opportunity to leverage those benefits by creating – or building upon existing – strong organizational entities that will provide a way for the downtowns to elevate themselves, each other and the SdCNHA as a whole. It is recommended that each downtown use this opportunity to become organized in a way that will provide long-term, tangible benefits.

The following narrative outlines the existing context of each of the downtowns, their opportunities and challenges and a demographic summary and provides summary tables outlining major points of group discussions held with business and property owners, residents and stakeholders in each of the three downtowns.

Downtown San Luis

Background
San Luis, the county seat of Costilla County, is located on Colorado Highway 159 in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado, about 35 miles southeast of Alamosa. Downtown San Luis is situated in a picturesque setting with the majority of the commercial buildings located along the traditional Main Street that is approximately four blocks long. The town of San Luis has approximately 650 residents and Costilla County has approximately 6,500
residents. San Luis was part of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, and was founded in 1851. It is the oldest continuously occupied town in Colorado.

San Luis sits at the foot of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains on the east. Just to the south and east of San Pedro Mesa are Sanchez Reservoir and Sanchez State Wildlife Area. Just to the west are the San Luis Hills with the San Juan Mountains acting as a backdrop. To the north is Mount Blanca, one of Colorado’s “fourteeners” (mountains that are 14,000 feet or more).

**Opportunities and Assets**

San Luis is rich in historical assets and the town itself is a historic district listed in the National Register. Many buildings in downtown San Luis have been built in the Spanish Colonial architectural style or in other compatible historic styles, giving San Luis a distinct look with enduring appeal. San Luis claims many “oldest” distinctions in Colorado including the oldest continually operated mercantile, oldest adobe courthouse, and oldest adjudicated water right.

Costilla County, like the rest of the San Luis Valley, is primarily agricultural. The agricultural heritage runs so deep that some members of families owning “Centennial” farms (where families have farmed the same land for more than 100 years) mentioned that different personality types in the Valley can often be traced to the soil type that they farm. La Vega is a unique agricultural and community asset in San Luis. It is a collectively owned agricultural commons that dates back to the original land grant from the Spanish viceroy. La Vega is served by one of the acequias (collectively owned agricultural ditches) that are found in the San Luis Valley and a few other locations in Colorado and New Mexico. Both La Vega and several acequias may be viewed from the downtown, and a walking path begins just outside of town that enables pedestrian access to this beautiful working landscape.

There is a strong movement to market local food that is grown and raised in the Valley that has potential to become a greater economic force in San Luis. Locals and tourists alike can provide markets for locally produced food. The Rio Culebra Cooperative (see more at http://www.rioculebra.com), located in downtown San Luis, brings together Costilla County farmers and ranchers with a common vision to revitalize community agriculture by integrating old and new practices, sustainable economics, youth education and use of renewable fuels. Through building upon the efforts of the Rio Culebra Cooperative, San Luis can provide demonstration gardens, expand on its summer farmers market and provide locally produced food throughout the year such as dried beans and grains as well as honey and frozen meat. As the local food movement gains momentum throughout the country, San Luis is well positioned as a leading edge example of how local food can enhance local economies.

San Luis is also home to several cultural assets. Sitting just above the town of San Luis, along a steep trail to the San Pedro Mesa overlooking the town, is a beautiful sculptural representation of the Catholic tradition of the Stations of the Cross, twelve sculptures by internationally acclaimed local artist Huberto Maestas depicting the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The trail, approximately one-third of a mile long starting from the upper end of Main Street, leads visitors from sculpture to sculpture. Completing the shrine at the top of the trail is an adobe church, La Capilla de Todos los Santos. It was hand built by the community and dedicated in 1997. The church and another small structure, designed as a meeting center or retreat, provide exquisite views of the town and the rest of the Valley below. Thousands of people visit this shrine annually and it appeals to locals and tourists alike.
The physical connection to the shrine offers downtown San Luis tremendous potential to encourage people to spend more time and explore the town and Main Street. Just across from the entrance is a small visitor center operated by the town, open when the adjacent town office is open and simply stocked with brochures from time to time. With more attention, this visitor center has great potential for guiding visitors to other points of interest in the town and across the Valley.

The Sacred Circle Mission Churches are a collection of nine late-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century churches located throughout Costilla County, detailed in a colorful brochure by the Costilla County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) and created in cooperation with the local parish. The EDC is working to create tours packaged around these assets, with the town of San Luis uniquely positioned as the portal to this unique religious destination.

Downtown is home to a civic complex to be known as the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center, originally constructed in the 1930’s as a school. The complex, renovated in the 1980’s with an early solar technology, once housed a local history museum among other uses. The CCEDC has been awarded a State Historic Grant in the amount of $450,000 to begin Phase I of a planned three-phase rehabilitation designed around the structure’s original character. Several nonprofit and civic organizations are currently housed in the heritage center including the Land Rights Council, Rio Culebra Agricultural Cooperative, the Acequia Association, and CCEDC. There is a courtyard area that can host events, farmers markets and other community gatherings that appeal to local residents and tourists alike.

When finalized the Heritage Center renovation will be a tremendous asset for the town of San Luis to showcase its unique heritage while providing information, maps and tours of the eastern part of the National Heritage Area.

**Challenges**

San Luis is the smallest of the three county seats in the National Heritage Area. It is also relatively geographically isolated, as Highway 159 is not a major through-route in the Valley. There is limited directional signage to alert travelers entering the Valley that San Luis exists, much less indicating the tremendous religious, artistic and cultural assets the town has to offer. The R&R Mercantile – which has been in continuous operation in San Luis since 1857 – is slated to close at the end of the summer tourist season (2011). Its closure will have a significant impact not only on attracting heritage tourists but also on the town’s economic vitality, as it is the only full service store of its kind in San Luis.

Due to its relatively limited overall commercial activity, the economic well-being of San Luis is very vulnerable. There are several commercial vacancies in town. Just one or two additional stores or restaurants closing would have a significant, detrimental impact on the town. A Family Dollar store has recently opened just north of the center of downtown, and will likely prove to be an important contributor to the town’s economy both through sales tax generation and by keeping local dollars in San Luis.

Currently, visitors to the Stations of the Cross do not spend much additional time in the town. The downtown must position itself to be better equipped to attract and serve visitors through additional shops, restaurants, hotel rooms and information about local culture, heritage and recreational opportunities. Some challenges to the visitor experience that discourage visitors to stop in San Luis or stay longer include the following:

- Difficulty finding available parking, especially for large vehicles;
- Intermittent and poorly coordinated business hours that leave no dining options at some times of the week and day; and
- Inconsistent availability of information at the existing Visitor Center about what is available in San Luis.

Land in Costilla County is almost entirely privately owned, which is an asset in that it generates property taxes and other revenues for the county. However, there is no major recreational draw in Costilla as on the public lands in many other areas of the Valley. Thus, San Luis must carefully preserve, enhance and market its unique cultural and heritage qualities to attract visitors.
Town of San Luis Demographic Summary

2009 Estimates:

- Population: 619
- Males: 300
- Females: 319
- Median Resident Age: 42.6 Years
- Estimated Median Household Income: $18,200
- Estimated Median Home Value: $97,820
- Population Density: 1,303 People per Square Mile
- 2011 Cost of Living Index for San Luis: 91.8
- Unemployed: 15.6%

San Luis Resident Racial Breakdown:

- White Non-Hispanic: 18.8%
- Hispanic: 78.8%
- Two or More Races: 2.4%

Education:

- High School or Higher: 55.9%
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 10.0%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 3.2%

Major Industries:

- Agriculture
- Government
- Educational Services
- Natural Resources

Downtown Antonito

Background

Antonito, the county seat of Conejos County, is located on US 285, 25 miles south of Alamosa. The town has about 900 residents; Conejos County as a whole has approximately 8,200 residents. Conejos is a beautiful area with breathtaking views and an appealing agricultural landscape. Antonito serves as the eastern terminus of the Cumbres & Toltec Narrow Gauge Railroad and the southern terminus of the San Luis and Rio Grande Railroad, a scenic railroad company that also hauls freight to Alamosa. Antonito benefits from its location at a crossroads of several of the more significant through-routes in the San Luis Valley. South of town, US 285 crosses into New Mexico, passes San Antonio Mountain and heads for Tres Piedras, NM. West of town, CO17 follows the Conejos River up into the San Juan Mountains/San Juan National Forest and crosses Mogote Pass and Cumbres Pass before crossing the New Mexico line and descending into Chama, the western terminus of the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad.

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1 Source: sangres.com
Opportunities and Assets
Downtown Antonito was originally established in 1880 as a stop of the Denver and Rio Grande “Chili Line.” Main Street (also US Highway 285) is approximately six blocks long. The town’s historic character is largely preserved in many of the existing buildings. The downtown has two restaurants, a library branch, two hotels and a bed & breakfast, a full service grocery and – like San Luis – a newly constructed Family Dollar Store slated to open in September, 2011.

Antonito is the Colorado home to the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad that draws upwards of 30,000 annual visitors. The train leaves daily from a station just south of Antonito’s downtown (constructed when the railroad became a scenic railroad, and the historic depot, located downtown, was still in use). It traverses the scenic Cumbres Pass and ends up 64 miles away in Chama, NM, where riders catch a bus back to the starting point. It is also possible to ride to the halfway point in Osier, NM, and return to Antonito by train.

The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad departs from La Veta and Alamosa, with occasional stops in Antonito beyond. There are approximately 25,000 boardings in Alamosa. During the high season (June –August), the Rio Grande line offers a weekly steam special to Antonito that allows passengers to transfer to the Cumbres & Toltec line.

The historic train depot downtown, now unused, has been awarded Colorado State Historic funding to begin to renovations to allow its reuse as a visitor center.

Unlike Costilla County, most (about two-thirds) of Conejos County is public land. Recreational opportunities in the County, including hiking, biking, wildlife viewing and camping, are abundant. The Conejos River is an acclaimed gold medal trout fishing river.

The Colorado Scenic Byway Los Caminos Antiguos connects Antonito to San Luis, a breathtaking drive that showcases the Sangre de Cristo and the San Juan mountain ranges. The scenic byway is a tremendous asset that could attract bikers, bird watchers or day trippers and could provide an opportunity for visitors to extend their stay in both San Luis and Antonito.

Challenges
While Antonito’s downtown has a strong, historic character, it lacks several assets that could make it a more appealing destination for visitors, investors and consumers, including:

- Limited opportunities to linger;
- Lack of town identity;
- Main Street as a highway stifles pedestrian movement;
- Inadequate small business support including technical and financial assistance to help attract new businesses and support existing ones; and
- Inconsistent operating hours that discourage spontaneous patronage of businesses.

While the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad attracts tens of thousands of visitors annually, train riders spend little time in Antonito for several reasons, including:

- Logistics surrounding the boarding and alighting of the train and the accompanying bus shuttle service that that takes train riders back to their vehicles in Chama or to their vehicles in Antonito;
- The location of the new depot, which is about one-half mile from town. Despite its being just a few hundred yards away, the average train rider may not even be aware that downtown exists; and
- Limited offerings in the downtown as noted above.
Key county services in Antonito are not concentrated in the downtown core. For historical reasons to do with establishment of the town in a more favorable location for commerce once the railroad was built, most of the county services, including the courts and post office, are located about one mile east of downtown. County residents utilizing county services are too far from downtown to encourage their patronage of Antonito’s restaurants and shops.

**Town of Antonito Demographic Summary**

2009 Estimates:
- Population: 761
- Males: 378
- Females: 383
- Median Resident Age: 36.5 Years
- Estimated Median Household Income: $25,705
- Estimated Median Home Value: $75,080
- 2011 Cost of Living Index for Antonito: 90.4
- Unemployed: 8.4%

Resident Racial Breakdown:
- White Non-Hispanic: 13.1%
- Hispanic: 86.1%
- Two or More Races: 0.8%

Education:
- High School or Higher: 65.2%
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 10.4%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 3.0%

Major Industries:
- Educational Services
- Agriculture
- Natural Resources
- Government
- Social Assistance

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2 Source: sangres.com
Alamosa

Background
Alamosa sits in the center of the San Luis Valley, surrounded by views of high mountains in all directions. It is the County seat of Alamosa County and functions as the “Valley Seat” of the entire San Luis Valley. The City of Alamosa was established in 1878 as a railroad center when the Denver & Rio Grande Western first came to the Valley. The Denver & Rio Grande Western headquartered much of its narrow gauge service for northern New Mexico and southwestern Colorado in Alamosa and had a large construction, repair and shipping facility here for many years.

Alamosa is the primary shopping center in the Valley and generates the majority of the sales tax. Alamosa is the only city in the SdCNHA and is much larger than any of the other towns, with a population of 8,756. Alamosa is located at the crossing of US 160 (east and west) with US 285/State Highway 17 (north and south) and is the center of commerce and resources for most of the Valley. Alamosa is also the center for the arts, culture, entertainment and education in the San Luis Valley. The historic Train Depot been refurbished and houses a variety of nonprofits and recently began serving as a Colorado Welcome Center.

Opportunities and Assets
Downtown Alamosa has many restaurants, coffee shops, city and county facilities, arts venues and seasonal events. It has the majority of the hotel rooms in the Valley. Even for those lodging elsewhere, the convenience and critical mass of retail and restaurant venues brings the vast majority of Valley visitors to Alamosa. Alamosa currently offers several events such as the summertime farmers market and an ice sculpture festival during the holiday season that are well attended by locals and visitors.

Alamosa is often considered the main portal to the San Luis Valley due to its size, services and amenities. Alamosa is the closest of the downtowns to the Great Sand Dunes National Park, which is about 35 miles northeast of Alamosa. With approximately 300,000 annual visitors, Great Sand Dunes National Park is one of the most popular attractions in the SdCNHA.

There are myriad economic and business development resources available in downtown Alamosa including an active Visitor and Convention Bureau, the Alamosa Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center and the San Luis Valley Economic Development Council, which offers a wide variety of financing and small business support. Many of the provider organizations are housed in the historic Train Depot building located in the heart of downtown.

Adams State College is just outside of the center of town. Adams State is a four year college that is home to 2,500 on-campus undergraduates with an additional 7,000 enrolled extended study students. The College offers Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's degrees in 50 areas of study. Trinidad State Junior College also has a satellite campus in town.

The City has begun construction on a new City Hall/Public Safety Complex. This project will bring all of the City services to one location including Public Works, Finance, City Manager, Clerk, Court, Police, Fire and Library.
Challenges
While downtown is generally a bustling center, there are several vacant storefronts as well as underutilized land.

Due to inadequate capacity, the Colorado Department of Transportation recently converted the previously two-way Main Street to a one-way couplet street, with State Street completing two-way travel. This change reduces traffic and may increase travel speed on Main Street, both of which can be detrimental to businesses. However, it has made pedestrian movement across Main Street somewhat easier and has opened up State Street to new investment.

Visitation to Alamosa drops sharply in the winter months, and many downtown businesses report negative profitability for several months of the year. The truncated tourist season forces businesses to generate enough revenue during the tourist season to allow them to stay open year-round. By offering unique retail and seasonal events, downtown Alamosa can entice locals and visitors to stay longer and visit beyond the warm-weather months.

Town of Alamosa Demographic Summary
2009 Estimates:
- Population: 8,756
- Males: 4,181
- Females: 4,575
- Median Resident Age: 27.7 Years
- Estimated Median Household Income: $28,583
- Estimated Median Home Value: $115,359
- Population Density: 2,195 People per Square Mile
- 2009 Cost of Living Index for Alamosa: 84.3
- Unemployed: 11.9%

Resident Racial Breakdown:
- White Non-Hispanic: 48.2%
- Hispanic: 46.8%
- African-American: 1.1%
- Native American: 1.1%
- Other: 1.3%
- Two or More Races: 1.6%

Education:
- High School or Higher: 82.5%
- Bachelor's Degree or Higher: 29.5%
- Graduate or Professional Degree: 12.9%

Major Industries:
- Educational Services
- Health Care
- Construction

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3 Source: sangres.com
Lodging & Food Services
Government
Automotive Services
Finance & Insurance Services
Social Assistance
Professional Services

Business & Property Owner Outreach: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Areas for Downtown Improvement

In early May, 2011, with extensive logistical support from community members, the consulting team held three community meetings to get a sense of what local residents and business owners consider to be the strengths, weaknesses and potential areas of improvement in their respective downtowns. At the end of each meeting, the small group participants were asked to vote for their top priorities for downtown improvements. The priority votes are recorded at the end of each summary table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San Luis Strengths/Opportunities</th>
<th>San Luis Weaknesses/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Historical Sites</td>
<td>Empty storefronts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streetscape, sidewalks w/CDOT funding up to 7th – can walk through town</td>
<td>CDOT streetscaping eliminated some parking – no maintenance money or for some areas; on north end, not complete to the new school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding may be avai for remaining segments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avail parking behind business</td>
<td>Parking need? Management/signage (Uncontrolled for courthouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renovation of museum to Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center to house several orgs: cooperative effort in community. Acequia Assn./Vega Assn./Rio Culebra Coop/Land Rights Council/Info center for local sites, recreation, services, etc. 3 yrs to opening</td>
<td>Closure of the museum (phase 1 to December 2011, then phase 2 interior starts) approx. 3 yrs. Total anticipated time of the closure is due to renovation project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stations of the Cross/Shrine (visit ½ day) Strong community effort</td>
<td>Lack of signage/information of what is in town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park with plans for improvement, no funding for construction or maintenance</td>
<td>Park not maintained due to funding. Unclear if owned by school, town, or Rio Culebra Recreation board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 full service restaurants</td>
<td>Decreasing population. 3663 in county 10 yrs ago, 3100 now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel and B&amp;B lodging</td>
<td>Not enough visitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County historical restoration of the pedestrian/bike path</td>
<td>Maintenance on Stations of Cross walkway also funding challenges. Donation boxes not secure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, education, word of mouth – some business owners etc. are great resources for visitors</td>
<td>Lack of understanding of local population of what is needed for education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to get across the street, easy to walk, streetscape narrows and calms.</td>
<td>County Road along the western edge of La Vega a beautiful drive but County closed off vehicle access from the town because of erosion issues. Now have to drive way around, can’t send visitors in autos there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1: SAN LUIS Business and Property Owners meeting - May 2, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San Luis Strengths/Opportunities</th>
<th>San Luis Weaknesses/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lots of great local ideas and energy!</td>
<td>Restaurants closed at the same time, poorly coordinated. Not enough patrons for businesses to guarantee regular hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibrant mix of stores and businesses for the size of the town</td>
<td>Lack of recreation center or other activities/venues for the children or community programming for school facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New School</td>
<td>Med Marijuana dispensary, tattoo parlor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses that offer wireless for visitors (VOP, Café Rosa Mystica)</td>
<td>Lack of technology and access – lack of providers, poor quality/bottlenecks from the internet and cell phone providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor center (though erratic hours/approach)</td>
<td>Limited funding resources and capacity to go after grants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: SAN LUIS Business and Property Owners meeting - May 2, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San Luis Solutions &amp; Improvements</th>
<th>Prioritization “Votes”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational capacity building to respond to potential visitors</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/collaboration between the Town, businesses, Church, School Chamber of Commerce or some kind of business group/coordination Timing/coordination on restaurants/business hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing, Information that San Luis exists even within the Valley. Quasi public information is not even included on maps and information</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding – variety of options (seed money and maintenance)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence, profile, marketing, more events – planning, coordination and marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautification: Façade improvements for empty buildings, trash pick-up, flowers, etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community education on what to say when someone asks what to do in San Luis</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3: ANTONITO Business and Property Owners meeting - May 2, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antonito Strengths/Opportunities</th>
<th>Antonito Weaknesses/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highway - people coming through</td>
<td>Traffic, equipment, CDOT control of signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDOT controls on billboards</td>
<td>Drainage issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic buildings including but not limited to Train Depot, rich history</td>
<td>Lighting in town inadequate for pedestrians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momentum, positive thinking, new businesses</td>
<td>Underutilized/abandoned buildings on Main St (absentee owners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate parking areas available (but not paved or signed)</td>
<td>Not enough RV/trailer/truck parking, no parking management, large vehicles end up in front of businesses blocking from view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access/ Gateway to Conejos and mountains, Gateway to CO/Taos</td>
<td>Weed Control and other maintenance on RR ROW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic trains and train travelers</td>
<td>Beautification especially trash control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3: ANTONITO Business and Property Owners meeting - May 2, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antonito Strengths/Opportunities</th>
<th>Antonito Weaknesses/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendly people, potential</td>
<td>Perception, reputation, image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good food</td>
<td>Loose dogs and no animal control in town, people know it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depot restoration grant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cano’s Castle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodging tax that generates $20K – dedicated to marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4: ANTONITO Business and Property Owners meeting - May 2, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antonito Solutions &amp; Improvements</th>
<th>Prioritization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations/Marketing/Education (tourists, locals, kids)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautification (volunteer day) trash, lighting, façade improvements, fillers for empty storefronts, more murals</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect trains/travelers to town, address logistical &amp; timing challenges, reconnect narrow gauge to depot (reinstall third rail to permit this)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building cross-cultural trust among elements of community, consistent community involvement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More arts &amp; artists</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stronger business, more join Chamber, better tax base, business enhancement</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design guidelines/animal ordinance</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5: ALAMOSA Business and Property Owners meeting - May 3, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alamosa Strengths/Opportunities</th>
<th>Alamosa Weaknesses/Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recent vacancies filled with independent local businesses</td>
<td>Economic uncertainty - weariness &amp; burn out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Façade and finish improvements</td>
<td>No merchants association or collective marketing efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Grande RR has helped business, invested a lot – opened 4 years ago (25,000, of which 65% are from Front Range)</td>
<td>Business mix not bad but some missing such as hardware (may go into shopping center) could use another anchor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depot</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDOT changed to one-way couplet 3 years ago because of high traffic volume. Has improved ability to cross the street, reduced noise. Avoided a truck by-pass. Opened up option for more development on same side as depot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wal-Mart brings people, issues hunting licenses</td>
<td>Wal-Mart hurt some of the DT merchants and locally owned businesses. 6 mi west of town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams State 3,200 students and 800 faculty/staff, also brings conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Wildlife Refuge, birding, lots of attractions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: ALAMOSA Business and Property Owners meeting - May 3, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bring people to downtown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alamosa is compact enough that if visitors come to anywhere in the city for any reason, they will likely come downtown to eat, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: ALAMOSA Business and Property Owners meeting - May 3, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alamosa Solutions &amp; Improvements</th>
<th>Prioritization “Vote”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More retail downtown – ground floor activation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing more specific and web presence for reaching Front Range and northern New Mexico, other key geographic areas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special events – increase quality and attendance, not necessarily quantity.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage: directional, informational, gateway (existing can’t be read from cars), inviting pedestrian lighting</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-season business enhancement to offset poor profitability/losses in off-season</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking for RVs/trailers – supply and management; not easy to find</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attracting &amp; retaining desirable demographic: diverse professionals, young people including the doctors recruited through the rural practitioners loan forgiveness programs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional event/civic center (non-hotel)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Existing Characteristics, Downtown San Luis, Antonito, and Alamosa

Table 7 summarizes a range of economic development-related characteristics of the three downtowns of the SdCNHA and provides a brief description of each downtown’s unique niche, focus and organizational capacity.
### Table 7: Summary of Economic Development Characteristics of SdCNHA Downtowns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District Niche</th>
<th>Areas of Focus</th>
<th>Goods &amp; Services Focus</th>
<th>Organizational Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>San Luis</strong></td>
<td>• Oldest town in CO</td>
<td>• Heritage interpretation</td>
<td>• Heritage Center</td>
<td>• Costilla County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) active and has made efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unique religious &amp; cultural resources</td>
<td>• Enhance visitor experience</td>
<td>• Locally produced foods</td>
<td>to be inclusive, but volunteer staff is over-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Distinct character</td>
<td>• Presence/profile/ promotion</td>
<td>• Local arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>tasked and member participation inconsistent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Compact, four-block downtown</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Religious-based gifts &amp; mementos</td>
<td>• Heritage Center committee a good model for other projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Antonito</strong></td>
<td>• Trains – Cumbres&amp;Toltec and Rio Grande lines</td>
<td>• Connections between trains and downtown</td>
<td>• Local arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>• No San Luis merchants group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local arts</td>
<td>• Enhance visitor experience</td>
<td>• Locally produced foods</td>
<td>• Lack of coordination between Town, Church, and CCEDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outdoor Recreation</td>
<td>• Town identity</td>
<td>• Amish goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Agriculture</td>
<td>• Arts</td>
<td>• Outdoor recreation goods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alamosa</strong></td>
<td>• Downtown to the SLV</td>
<td>• Vibrant mix of businesses</td>
<td>• SLV locals’ needs</td>
<td>• Home to many Valley-wide economic development resources and organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information, lodging &amp; commerce center</td>
<td>• Identity &amp; roles of CVB, Chamber, other groups</td>
<td>• Dining and lodging</td>
<td>• No independent merchants group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gateway to multiple Valley attractions</td>
<td>• Effective merchants group</td>
<td>• Locally produced foods</td>
<td>• Chamber does not serve the purpose(s) that downtown merchants want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trains - history &amp; Rio Grande line</td>
<td>• Identity/profile</td>
<td>• Professional services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Agricultural history &amp; products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Prepared by P.U.M.A.
APPENDIX E
Sample Organizational and Financing Strategies for Downtown San Luis, Antonito, and Alamosa

In order to maximize the economic development opportunities the SdCNHA brings to the three downtowns, each must increase its organizational and financial capacity and demonstrate its ability to serve as a strong partner for heritage and cultural projects that will promote and enhance the SdCNHA. Although it can be expected that SdCNHA will bring new funding resources to the San Luis Valley, the number and cost of eligible and desirable projects that would contribute to the overall cohesion of the SdCNHA will undoubtedly exceed the available annual federal funding available through the National Heritage Area program.

SdCNHA will need to leverage project funding and direct it where local partners have demonstrated initiative and capacity through volunteer activities, downtown enhancements, on-going organizational efforts, fundraising and partnerships. The success of the projects will ultimately reflect on the SdCNHA and affect the amount of federal funding allocations in future years. Therefore stakeholders will need to demonstrate their commitment, capacity and ability to collaborate with each other and the SdCNHA in order to gain the support and financial backing of the SdCNHA.

Table 8 provides recommended actions and associated phasing that the existing downtown groups can take to achieve their goals and priorities and demonstrate an ability and willingness to create stronger organizational capacity to support and implement projects that are funded (on a matching basis) by the SdCNHA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate Term (6-12 months)</th>
<th>Near-Term (1-3 years)</th>
<th>Mid-Term (3-5 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>San Luis, Costilla County</strong></td>
<td><strong>CCEDC (Costilla County Economic Development Corporation) forms sub-committees and recruits chairs/members to address the following projects:</strong></td>
<td><strong>HC committee expands HC plan to include capitalization, operation, maintenance, and programming for phases 2 and 3 with technical assistance.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stations of the Cross (with Church and Town representation) maintenance and upkeep</td>
<td>Sacred Circle Tour</td>
<td>CCEDC Heritage Center committee oversees Phase 3 restoration and implements the business plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Circle Tour</td>
<td>Local Foods (with Rio Culebra Cooperative) and Visitor Experience (with Visitor Center, merchants, and Town representation).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Term (6-12 months)</td>
<td>Near-Term (1-3 years)</td>
<td>Mid-Term (3-5 years)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heritage Center committee develops a business plan and feasibility study and business plan for the capitalization and operation of the HC phases 2 and 3 with technical assistance from for-profit entities, SBDC, SLVDRC, DOLA and others. Oversees phase 1 rehabilitation.</td>
<td>• HC committee oversees phase 2 restoration and coordinates match funding for phase 3.</td>
<td>• Heritage Center occupant organizations form alliance for ongoing management and programming. Heritage Center organizations interpret unique local religious, cultural, and heritage resources for visitors including Acequias, La Vega, Sacred Circle Tour, Heritage Foods, Stations of the Cross, etc. Collaborate with CCEDC, SdCNHA for marketing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Heritage Center committee coordinates match funding for phase 2 from sources such as Department of Local Affairs, El Pomar, Colorado Historical Society, SdCNHA, Federal allocations.</td>
<td>• Town adopts downtown design guidelines to protect the unique, historic character of San Luis as a collective asset.</td>
<td>• Town considers development standards for areas surrounding downtown to ensure that future development will not erode the unique identity of San Luis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stations of the Cross committee enhances way-finding signage and donation box security to stabilize maintenance.</td>
<td>• Town regulates downtown uses to keep vitality-killing uses off Main Street (e.g., parking lots.)</td>
<td>• Merchants organization establishes a reliable revenue stream to provide coordination and ongoing financing mechanism for maintenance and improvements, either through a tax, mill levy, or special district (such as a Downtown Development Authority, Business Improvement District, or Urban Renewal Authority – see attached table outlining Colorado financing mechanisms that may be applicable).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sacred Circle Tour (SCT) committee develops a plan to manage and implement the Sacred Circle Tour with technical assistance.</td>
<td>• Local Foods committee begins a summer farmers market featuring local foods that does not conflict with others in SLV.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CCEDC collaborates with SdCNHA staff to enhance awareness and marketing of San Luis offerings, location, and events (e.g., Stations of the Cross, Sacred Circle Tour, Acequia, La Vega, Heritage Center, Santana).</td>
<td>• Visitor Experience committee addresses issues such as coordination of business hours and parking availability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8: Sample Downtown Economic Development and Capacity-building Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate Term (6-12 months)</th>
<th>Near-Term (1-3 years)</th>
<th>Mid-Term (3-5 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Visitor Experience committee addresses parking management for RVS and trailers, availability of informational materials at Visitor Center.</td>
<td>• Local merchants form an alliance, either stand-alone or as a committee of EDC, and expand focus to include cooperative marketing and complete sidewalk connections.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SBDC provides technical assistance to existing and potential merchants one day/week to enhance viability and profitability of individual businesses.</td>
<td>• CCEDC Sacred Circle Tour committee implements Sacred Circle Tour plan. Explore funding as a project of SdCNHA.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CCEDC coordinates with Conejos Chamber of Commerce, SdCNHA for joint marketing of Antonito and San Luis offerings such as Los Caminos Antiguos, local foods, arts, and other products.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Antonito, Conejos County**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber forms committees and recruits chairs/members to address</th>
<th>• Marketing committee coordinates with Costilla County EDC for joint marketing of Antonito and San Luis offerings utilizing Los Caminos Antiguos to connect the two communities, and enhance the local foods, arts, and other products.</th>
<th>• Merchants organization establishes a reliable revenue stream to provide coordination and ongoing financing mechanism for maintenance and improvements, either through a tax, mill levy, or special district (such as a Downtown Development Authority, Business Improvement District, or Urban Renewal Authority see attached table outlining Colorado financing mechanisms that may be applicable).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Train Connections (with merchants, trains, and Town representation), • Clean &amp; Safe (with merchant, residents, Town and County representation), and • Marketing (including Town, trains, and merchant representation).</td>
<td>• Marketing committee engages local artists in developing a logo, identity and unique signage for Antonito and works with the train lines to distribute quality marketing materials to passengers.</td>
<td>• Restored Depot opens with a sustainable tenant/use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train Connections committee explores options for better visitor staging logistics with Cumbres&amp; Toltec RR, works with Rio Grande line from Alamosa to arrive earlier so passengers have time to visit downtown Antonito.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate Term (6-12 months)</th>
<th>Near-Term (1-3 years)</th>
<th>Mid-Term (3-5 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clean &amp; Safe committee develops strategies to address trash, stray dogs, and vandalism.</td>
<td>• Downtown merchants join together for a stand-alone alliance or membership organization.</td>
<td>• Train Connections committee oversees restoration of 3rd rail and the Cumbres&amp; Toltec once again offers a stop in downtown Antonito.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Marketing committee collaborates with SdCNHA staff to enhance awareness and marketing of Antonito offerings.</td>
<td>• Train Connections committee develops interim connections between current train depot and downtown, such as walking path, signage, Amish buggy rides, bikes for loan/rent, etc.</td>
<td>• Artists’ cooperative opens and runs a cooperative offering high quality locally produced fine arts and crafts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Depot Task Force develops a business and programming plan for the Depot with technical assistance from SBDC, SLVDRC, and others.</td>
<td>• Depot Task Force oversees restoration of the Depot and, with technical assistance, expands business plan to include programming, operation, and maintenance of the restored facility.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SBDC provides technical assistance to existing and potential merchants one day/week to enhance viability and profitability of individual businesses.</td>
<td>• Clean &amp; Safe committee implements strategies and projects to address trash, stray dogs, and vandalism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local merchants work with the Town and CDOT to improve traffic and parking management, especially for RVs and trailers.</td>
<td>• SLV food cooperative and Amish community coordinate to offer a summer farmers market featuring local products on a day that does not conflict with others in SLV.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Chamber convenes artists to plan and organize a multi-artist cooperative gallery in downtown Antonito.</td>
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</table>

**Alamosa, Alamosa County**

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<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Downtown merchants form a membership organization to concentrate on Downtown marketing and beautification.</td>
<td>• Merchant’s organization and City create a special district, such as a Downtown Development Authority, Business Improvement District, or Urban Renewal Authority to provide coordination and ongoing financing mechanism for maintenance and improvements.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SLV Food Cooperative runs a year-round commercial kitchen that serves to incubate local small businesses selling food-based products.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8: Sample Downtown Economic Development and Capacity-building Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Near-Term (1-3 years)</th>
<th>Mid-Term (3-5 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Chamber, CVB, and merchants association clarify their respective roles and responsibilities so that each can be most effective and efficient.</td>
<td>• Special district funds member-directed downtown improvements such as events, beautification and maintenance, filling empty storefronts, improved downtown wayfinding signage and lighting.</td>
<td>• Merchants/special district develops a year-round market in downtown that offers local products from throughout the SLV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Merchants association works with Rio Grande, CDOT to improve parking availability and management for RVs and trailers.</td>
<td>• Special district creates targeted incentives to attract downtown businesses that members identify as likely to enhance downtown’s vitality.</td>
<td>• CVB leads development of a regional event and conference facility that will provide a venue for events that increase occupancy of existing hotels year round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• CVB collaborates with SdCNHA to enhance awareness and marketing of Alamosa/SLV heritage and cultural offerings.</td>
<td>• Chamber continues to host quality events that attract visitors, improve off-season opportunities for local merchants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Chamber provides support and resources to assist businesses and coordinates collaborative marketing for Alamosa businesses.</td>
<td>• Chamber markets Alamosa’s quality of life to temporary/potential residents in desirable demographic segments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• SBDC provides technical assistance to existing and potential merchants to enhance viability and profitability of individual businesses.</td>
<td>• Downtown Alamosa collaborates with SdCNHA, serves as the geographic center of information about offerings, attractions, events, and services for the entire SLV.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Appendix F: Existing Conditions – Historic Resource Inventories and Interpretive Sites within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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APPENDIX F: EXISTING CONDITIONS — HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORIES AND INTERPRETIVE SITES WITHIN THE SANGRE DE CRISTO NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

History Colorado’s Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) serves as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and administers federal and state preservation programs within Colorado, including the National Register of Historic Places, Colorado State Register of Historic Places, Centennial Farms Program, and surveys of historic and archaeological resources. Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, over 2,300 properties and features have been inventoried through historic and archeological research surveys overseen by the OAHP. Access to the inventories of surveyed properties is available through Compass, OAHP’s online digital database of cultural resources, and may be obtained in GIS format.

National and State Registers of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In Colorado, the National Register includes over 1,300 listings, both individual properties and historic districts containing multiple properties. All properties listed in the National Register are automatically listed in the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties. Properties may also be nominated separately to the Colorado State Register without inclusion in the National Register.

Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area there are 38 individually listed properties on the National and State Registers. One of these, Pike’s Stockade, is also listed as a National Historic Landmark. A short summary of each listed property, derived from the OAHP, is provided below.

Resources Determined Eligible for Listing on the National Register

In addition to the properties that have already been listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places, 13 additional historic resources and three (unidentified) archeological resources have been officially determined eligible for listing within the last decade but have not yet been listed. In many cases these require additional documentation. Properties deemed officially eligible for listing include:

- Jones Ranch (Centennial Farm), Alamosa
- Splashland Hot Springs Pool, Alamosa
- Alamosa Water Works, Alamosa
- Farmer’s Union Canal, Hooper vicinity
- Alamosa Ranger Station, Rio Grande National Forest
- River Springs Work Center, Rio Grande National Forest
- Stunner Phone Line Cabin, Rio Grande National Forest
• Trinchera Irrigation Co., Blanca
• West's Shoe Store, Blanca
• Forest Tango, Blanca
• Blanca Gas Station, Blanca

In addition, 47 other resources have been determined eligible for listing on the National or State Registers during field surveys. In most cases, however, these surveys were conducted more than ten years ago and all would require updated assessments and additional research to verify their eligibility.

**Centennial Farms**

The Colorado Centennial Farms program designates farms and ranches that have been owned and operated by the same family for 100 years or more. The program was established to honor the significant role that these families have had in settling and shaping the Colorado. Centennial Farms receive a sign to display on their property, and each year, Colorado’s newest centennial farm and ranch families are honored during an awards ceremony held in late August at the Colorado State Fair in Pueblo. Since the program’s inception in 1986 through 2009, 375 farms and ranches have been recognized under the program with more than 200 receiving Historic Structures Awards for continued use of at least four structures 50 years or older. Designated Centennial Farms, the majority of which were established between 1880 and 1895, are located in 61 of 64 counties. Within the Heritage Area, there are 11 Centennial Farms. Established in 1851, the Ortega Farm in San Luis is Colorado’s oldest designated Centennial Farm.

• Maddux Ranch, Alamosa (est. 1874)
• Jones Ranch, Alamosa (est. 1884)
• Paul Peterson Ranch, Conejos (est. 1900)
• Stewart Ranch, Conejos (est. 1863)
• Gonzales Farm, Conejos (est. 1870)
• Valdez Farm, Conejos (est. 1890)
• Salazar Farm and Ranch, Conejos (est. 1888)
• Corpus A. Gallegos Ranches, Costilla (est. 1860)
• Atencio Farm, Costilla (est. 1894)
• A. Prax Ortega Farm, Costilla (est. 1851)
• Rio Culebra Ranch, Costilla (est. 1863)

**Alamosa County —**

**Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Places**

17 designated; 673 inventoried

*Alamosa County Courthouse, 702 4th St. Alamosa*

*National Register 9/29/1995*

The U-shaped complex is one of the county’s best examples of the Mission style architecture. The largest of several Works Progress Administration projects built in the county during the 1930s, the courthouse construction began in 1936. Using local clay and sand, the WPA workers produced more than 450,000 bricks at a kiln located north of Alamosa. The courthouse continues to house a variety of county offices.
Alamosa Masonic Hall, 514 San Juan
State Register 5/14/1997
The building’s elaborate stamped metal upper story represents a period of construction associated with the arrival of the railroad and the resulting ability to import prefabricated architectural elements. Built in 1887, it was one of the first major buildings to be constructed on what would become Alamosa’s main street. Street-level retail stores supported the second-story hall both physically and financially.

Alamosa Post Office, 703 4th St., Alamosa
National Register 7/22/2009
The Public Works Administration (PWA) constructed the 1935 Alamosa Post Office as a program of the New Deal legislative agenda set forth by President Roosevelt during the Great Depression. The post office is significant as an excellent example of the Mixed Style - exhibiting elements of Art Deco, Classical Revival, and the locally prevalent Mission Revival.

American National Bank Building, 500 State Ave.
National Register 4/15/1999
Constructed in 1909 during a period of rapid growth in the San Luis Valley, the bank building reflects the optimism associated with an important phase of downtown Alamosa’s commercial development. The virtually intact brick building is a good example of an Arcaded Block, a popular commercial building type during the early decades of the 20th century. The building functioned as a bank until 1951, and for many years it housed a flower shop. (2001 photograph.)

Bain’s Department Store, 510 Main St. & 509 Hunt Ave., Alamosa
This Depression-era building opened as the largest department store in the San Luis Valley, offering groceries and clothes as well as household and farm goods. Owner Victor Bain made extensive use of recycled materials to minimize construction costs.

Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Depot (Alamosa County Offices), 610 State St., Alamosa
The depot operated as an important transfer point for passengers, mail, and freight traveling between Denver, Creede, Santa Fe and Durango. Agricultural development in the valley made it essential for coordinating crop shipments. Built in 1908, to replace an 1878 depot destroyed by fire, the west section was added in 1930. Its Spanish tile roof reflects the San Luis Valley’s Hispanic heritage. Passenger and freight use decreased in the 1950s, leading to the station’s closure. Subsequent interior remodeling occurred to accommodate city offices, but the exterior remains nearly as built. The property is associated with the Railroads in Colorado, 1858-1948 Multiple Property Submission.

Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Locomotive No. 169, Cole Park, Alamosa
Built in 1883, this narrow gauge, coal fired, ten-wheeler steam locomotive remained in service for over 50 years. In 1939, it was taken out of storage to represent the D&RGW Railroad at the World’s Fair in New York City. The ten-wheel design was considered the best arrangement for passenger locomotives, as the four-wheel lead truck worked best on uneven track. The six larger driver wheels provided increased pulling capacity and speed, making it one of the fastest narrow gauge engines built. In 1941, No. 169 came to rest at Cole Park, a gift to the city from the railroad.
First Baptist Church, 408 State Ave., Alamosa
National Register 5/22/2005
Construction began on the First Baptist Church in 1907. An asymmetrical composition consisting of a variety of forms, textures and materials, the church epitomizes the Queen Anne style. This is the only ornamental concrete block public building in Alamosa. The building also has the distinction of being the oldest standing church in Alamosa. This property is associated with the Ornamental Concrete Block in Colorado Multiple Property Submission.

Husung Hardware, 625 Main St., Alamosa
National Register 1/28/2000
Constructed in 1936 with a terra cotta facade and stylized ornamentation, the two-story brick building possesses the distinctive characteristics of Art Deco, a style not well represented in Alamosa County or in other small towns across Colorado. This well-preserved building is considered one of the best small town expressions of Art Deco in the state.

Mt. Pleasant School, Junction of County Rd. 3S and Rd. 103S, Alamosa vicinity
National Register 5/3/2006
Located about eight miles west of Alamosa, it is the third school at this location. Built in 1911, the Mt. Pleasant School building served as the area’s only school until 1965 and the last one-room school in the Alamosa vicinity. As the only public building on the rural landscape, it was not only a center of education, but also a focus of community life, hosting a variety of activities. In its size, scale, window placement, and interior configuration, the building epitomizes the rural schoolhouse. Its clustered windows and hipped roof reflect turn-of-the-century “innovations” in rural school design. This property is associated with Rural School Buildings in Colorado Multiple Property Submission.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 727 4th St., Alamosa
Constructed between 1922 and 1928, the church is an interesting interpretation of the Mission style designed by prominent architect Robert Willison. The interior includes outstanding murals painted by local artist Josef Steinhage that were recognized nationally in Catholic circles.

St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 607 4th St., Alamosa
National Register 3/4/2003
The building, which consists of a 1926 parish hall and a 1930 sanctuary addition, is an example of the Mission Revival style as evidently its smooth stucco walls, curvilinear parapets, and round-arched window openings. It is one of the few religious properties designed by the prolific Denver architectural firm of William E. and Arthur A. Fisher.

Howard Store (Hooper Town Hall), 8681 Main St., Hooper
National Register 2/1/2006
This well-preserved 1891 storefront is a textbook example of a small 19th century commercial building with its recessed central transomed entrance flanked by large display windows above paneled wood kickplates. The building possesses the distinctive characteristics of the False Front Commercial type. Its facade rises to form a parapet wall with a decorated cornice extending above the gabled roof and side walls. Three sides of the building are sheathed in sheet metal siding stamped to resemble rock-faced stone masonry. Manufacturers and retailers promoted this economical means of ornamentation as a durable and fire-resistant material. The building is the town’s best preserved example of embossed sheet metal siding and is one of the town’s oldest and longest operating general merchandise establishments.
**Medano Ranch Headquarters, Approximately 9 miles northeast of Mosca**
National Register 2/4/2004
The Medano Ranch Headquarters is an important part of the development of cattle ranching in the San Luis Valley from the open range days of the 1870s through the mechanized operations of the period following World War II. The Medano Ranch is one of the oldest continuously operated properties in the area and its buildings and structures reflect the evolution of ranching as a large-scale enterprise during the late 19th and 20th centuries.

**Indian Grove, Mosca vicinity**
National Register 3/24/2000
Indian Grove, located within Great Sand Dunes National Monument, is a concentration of 72 mature ponderosa pine trees, many of which contain large scars. Archaeologists believe that Ute Indians peeled the bark from these trees, and that the site can provide important information about Ute social history and subsistence strategies. The majority of these culturally modified trees were peeled between 1816 and 1848. Very few definitive Ute sites have been identified in Colorado.

**Superintendent’s Residence, Great Sand Dunes National Monument, SR. 150, southwest of Mosca**
National Register 11/2/1989
Constructed in the Territorial Adobe style, the building features a gabled roof, an Anglo modification of the traditional Hispanic flat roof. It was the largest project undertaken by the WPA during its late 1930s work at Great Sand Dunes. It represents the Rustic Movement, championed by the National Park Service’s first director, Stephen T. Mather, who advocated the use of native materials and vernacular building traditions wherever possible.

**Trujillo Homestead, Approximately 4 miles north of 6N Lane, Mosca vicinity**
The Trujillo Homestead is an important part of Hispanic settlement in the San Luis Valley in the latter half of the 19th century. Pedro Trujillo, a first generation Hispanic-American, established the property in 1879. The homestead is representative of small-scale pioneer cattle enterprises which typified the first ranches established in the area. The homestead is also associated with the pattern of violence and intimidation experienced by early Hispanic ranchers as large Anglo-American cattle operations expanded and consolidated their holdings.

**Zapata Ranch Headquarters, 5303 SR 150**
National Register 4/5/1993, 5AL.297
Zapata Ranch was one of the first and largest cattle ranches in the area. It also served as a stage coach stop and post office. Some of its buildings date back to the 1870s, and all of the historic ranch buildings are of log construction.

**Conejos County**

**Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Places**

**13 designated; 1275 inventoried**

**Costilla Crossing Bridge, County Rd., over Rio Grande River**
National Register 2/4/1985
Completed in 1892, this pin/rigid connected, eight-panel Thacher through truss is significant for its unusual structural style, patented in 1884 by Edwin Thacher, then Chief Engineer of the Keystone Bridge Company.
Never very popular, only the Wrought Iron Bridge Company manufactured metal versions. It is the oldest vehicular truss in southern Colorado.

**Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad San Juan Extension, (Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad), Antonito to Chama, New Mexico, over Cumbres Pass**

*National Register 1/16/1973, additional documentation and boundary increase 4/24/2007*

This nationally significant narrow-gauge railroad segment exists as one of only two operating sections of what was once a state wide network of three foot gauge tracks built and operated by the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Completed in 1880, the 64-mile line helped to sustain the ranching and logging activities in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, supplied the oil industry in and around Chama and Farmington, New Mexico, and formed a link for the transportation of precious metals from the San Juan mining camps to Denver.

**Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot, 6128 Front St., Antonito**

*State Register 8/31/2006*

The 1880 Denver & Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG) Antonito Depot is an important and distinctive masonry example of a combination-type depot active in the San Luis Valley. The depot served for over sixty years as the junction point for the branch line to Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the D&RG’s San Juan Extension from Alamosa to Durango and Silverton. In addition to providing passenger and express package service, and housing the local office of the Western Union telegraph, the depot also served as the office for railroad freight operations originating or terminating in the Antonito area. The depot was the western-most station on the Rio Grande’s San Juan Extension accommodating both standard and narrow gauge trains.

**Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad Engine 463, US Hwy. 285 (Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad), Antonito**

*National Register 5/12/1975*

Built in 1903 by the Baldwin Locomotive Works of Philadelphia, Engine No. 463 is one of only two remaining locomotives of the K-27 series originally built for and operated by the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. The K-27 series was a departure from the design most prevalent on Colorado’s narrow gauge lines, resulting in a locomotive with one and one-half times more power. The arrival of this series marked a significant turning point in the operation of the D&RGW’s narrow gauge lines that was to remain in effect until the end of Class I narrow gauge steam locomotion in 1968.

**Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad Combination Car No. 60, Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Antonito to Cumbres**

*State Register 6/9/1999, Boundary Change 8/14/2002*

Built in 1897 for the Florence & Cripple Creek Railroad, the first railroad to reach the gold mines of the Victor and Cripple mining districts, Combination Car No. 60 operated as a suburban coach until about 1909 when it was converted to a combination baggage and passenger car. One of only two surviving F&CC passenger coaches in the United States, it is the only surviving example of a combination passenger-baggage car from the railroad.

**Palace Hotel, 429 Main St., Antonito**

*National Register 8/19/1994*

Expanding railroad service created the need for construction of the Palace Hotel. Due to its location at the junction of the Rio Grande Railroad’s line to Chama, Durango and the San Juan Mountains and its branch to Santa Fe, Antonito became an important trade center in the southern San Luis Valley. The Palace Hotel provided overnight accommodations for salesmen, wool merchants, and tourists beginning in 1890.

**SPMDTU Concilio Superior, 603 Main St., Antonito**

*National Register 3/29/2001*

As the headquarters for La Sociedad Proteccion Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos since 1925, the building represents an important aspect of Hispanic history. Originally created to combat racism against Hispanics in
the San Luis Valley, this fraternal organization later expanded to provide mutual aid, thereby playing an important role in the overall social history of Colorado. Construction of this building popularized the use of steel trusses, introduced changes in massing, and promoted hybridized Southwest vernacular designs subsequently utilized in other Hispano enclaves.

Warshauer Mansion, 515 River St., Antonito
National Register 8/30/1974
This large 1912 brick and stucco home, with a red tile roof, was built for Fred B. Warshauer, a German immigrant who rose to county prominence in the sheep business. Denver architect George F. Harvey drew the plans according to Warshauer’s specifications. Unusual for the period, the house boasts a central vacuum cleaning system and a fire control system.

La Jara Depot (La Jara Town Hall), Broadway & Main, La Jara
National Register 5/12/1975
La Jara traces its birth to the arrival of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in 1880. Located on part of the San Juan Extension between Alamosa and Silverton, the 1911 depot served as a shipping point for area ranchers and farmers. Gradually the automobile and truck replaced the railroad as the primary mode of transportation, and the railroad eventually closed the depot. In 1970, the town acquired the building and transformed it into the town hall.

La Capilla De San Antonio De Padua, County Rd. 28, Lasauses
State Register 12/10/1997
Incorporating a wall of the original 1880 church, construction began on this adobe chapel in 1928. The building reflects the importance of churches as centers and symbols of southern Colorado Hispanic communities. It is the only remaining public/community building representing the village of Lasauses.

San Rafael Presbyterian Church, County Rd. 9, Mogote
The circa 1895 church, which was lengthened in 1911, is one of the oldest extant adobe churches in Conejos County. The oblique entry and bell tower, with its pyramidal roof and tall spire, create an asymmetrical composition that is quite different from the typical Territorial Adobe church. The building also represents the inroads made by the Presbyterian Church into Hispanic southern Colorado, which was predominately Catholic. It is the only remaining Hispanic-speaking Presbyterian church in Conejos County.

McIntire Ranch, County Rd. V, Sanford vicinity
National Register 3/26/2008
The McIntire Ranch has the potential to yield information important to our understanding about the layout patterns of ranch complexes. The site has a high archaeological potential for addressing gender-related research questions. Comparing economic strategies and consumer behaviors practiced by owner Florence McIntire from around 1880 to 1912 could lead to a better understanding of use patterns on the site prior to and after her divorce. The use patterns may also help to define her role as the owner of the ranch.

Pike’s Stockade Site, Colo. Hwy. 136, 4 miles east of Sanford
National Historic Landmark 7/4/1961, National Register 10/15/1966
Located along the north bank of the Conejos River, the site marks the spot where, in 1807, Zebulon Pike raised the American flag over what was then Spanish territory. The site is now owned by the Colorado Historical Society and a replica of the stockade exists near the location of the original structure.
Costilla County –
Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Places
11 designated; 357 inventoried

San Luis Valley Southern Railway Trestle, County Rd. 12, Blanca vicinity
National Register 1/6/2004
The Costilla Estates Development Company, a business organized to sell lands within the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant, built the 32-mile San Luis Valley Southern Railway. This trestle, an excellent example of timber stringer standard gauge railroad bridge construction, was built in 1910 and carried freight and passenger service until 1939. It is the only remaining SLVS trestle.

Barlow & Sanderson Stagecoach, SR 159, Fort Garland compound
State Register 6/14/1995
This Barlow and Sanderson Stagecoach provided basic transportation throughout the San Luis Valley of Colorado and New Mexico in the late 19th century. The stagecoach is a rare example of an Abbot-Downing mud wagon type built around 1871.

Fort Garland, SR 159, south of US Hwy. 160
Fort Garland is important for its association with the settlement of the San Luis Valley and southern Colorado. Built in 1858, the fort served as a base of military operations until it was abandoned in 1883. Company G of the Ninth Cavalry, a unit of Buffalo Soldiers, operated out of the fort from the spring of 1876 until September 1879. The Buffalo Soldiers were African American troopers who received their nickname from Southern Plains Indians who perceived similarities between the soldiers’ curly black hair and the matted fur between the horns of the buffalo. The Buffalo Soldiers saw scant military action through their brief assignment at Fort Garland. In 1876, troops marched to the La Plata region to prevent conflict between Ute Indians and white prospectors. The Colorado Historical Society operates Fort Garland as one of its regional museums.

San Acacio San Luis Southern Railway Depot, North of Colo. Hwy. 142, San Acacio
State Register 12/9/1998
Built in 1910, it is the largest depot constructed by the San Luis Southern Railway, a 32-mile standard gauge railroad built to serve the towns and farms planned by the Costilla Estates Development Company. The two-story depot also served as railway headquarters until 1950, and it is all that is left in San Acacio to represent the railroad and the company that created the town.

Plaza de San Luis de la Culebra Historic District, SR 159, San Luis
National Register 12/22/1978, 5CT.47
Established in 1851, San Luis is the oldest continuously inhabited town in Colorado. The district contains an important collection of buildings that includes the county courthouse, the convent and Church of Most Precious Blood, numerous residences, and the town’s commercial core. The district also includes the Vega, a common ground for animal grazing, and the San Luis People’s Ditch.

Rito Seco Creek Culvert, SR 142, San Luis
National Register 10/15/2002
Consisting of two 18-foot spans, the steel multiplate arch culvert is faced with local volcanic fieldstone. Constructed in 1936, the culvert remains intact as a good example of one of the smaller bridges built by the Works Progress Administration during the years of the Great Depression.
Salazar House, 603 Main St., San Luis
Constructed in 1906, the house is an example of an ornamental concrete block residence. Its Queen Anne detailing is an unusual expression for concrete block construction and for Costilla County.

San Luis Bridge, Colo. Hwy. 159, San Luis
National Register 2/4/1985
Completed over Culebra Creek on the western edge of San Luis in 1911, this segmental, reinforced concrete open spandrel arch is one of the earliest unaltered bridges of this type in Colorado.

Sociedad de Nuestro Padre Jesus Nazareno (San Francisco Morada), San Pablo vicinity
State Register 3/8/2000
This circa 1908 building represents an important aspect of Hispano history in southern Colorado. The building reflects the limited religious and governmental support in poor rural areas of predominately Hispanic populations and the aid societies that formed as a result. Los Hermanos Penitentes (a lay religious, fraternal organization) constructed and used the building as a chapel and meeting hall. The organization also served as a cultural force, preserving language, lore, customs, and faith within the isolated communities. The elongated adobe building was constructed following the traditional linear plan of northern New Mexico.

Interpretive Sites

The following sites have been identified as key to telling the story of the Heritage Area.

Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic & Historic Byway (Wayside Exhibits)
This 129-mile National Scenic Byway links the four Cornerstone Communities of Alamosa, Fort Garland, San Luis, and Antonio, as well as the Great Sand Dunes National Park, the San Luis Lakes State Park, the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge, Zapata Falls, the Medano-Zapata Ranch, the San Juan National Forest, the Conejos River, Culebra Creek, and the Rio Grande. Smaller communities along this route include: Mosca, Blanca, San Acacio, Manassa, Romeo, Conejos, Paisaje, Mogote, La Mesitas, and Fox Creek. There are 22 waysides along the way that provide interpretation of specific topics and sites.

Location: The 129-mile route may be picked up along any of the CO Hwys: 17, 142, 150, 159, US 285 and US 160.
Open: Year-round. Heavy snowfall can temporarily close La Manga and Cumbres passes.
Fee: Free

http://www.rmpbs.org/byways/lca_summary.html

- The story – Named the “ancient road,” the byway interprets the natural and cultural history of the San Luis Valley.
- The waysides – There are 22 waysides placed along the route. Interpretive topics include the Rio Grande, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, Conejos Canyon, Adams State College, Spanish Entradas, the Aquifers & Closed Basin, the Alamosa NWR, Dune Formation, Blanca Wetlands, Zapata Falls, Paleo-Indians, Tewa Indians, Blanca Peak, Penitentes, the Alpine Desert, Fort Massachusetts, Fort Garland, Buffalo Soldiers, San Luis—Oldest Town in Colorado, La Vega, Acequias, Stations of the Cross, Lt. Zebulon Pike, Pike’s Stockade, King’s Turquoise Mine, the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Jack Dempsey, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.
- The current visitor experience – The stories are told through interpretive wayside exhibits.
- Visitor services – Varies with each community (see details below).
Anchor Sites

Five sites have been identified as primary or anchor attractions within the Heritage Area. These are sites that currently offer a specific visitor experience which includes interpretation through exhibits or special events and programs. These sites are open to the public and have specified days/hours/months of operation.

1. **Great Sand Dunes National Park**

   **Location:** 11999 Highway 150; Mosca, Colorado 81146  
   **Open:** The Visitor Center is open daily except winter holidays. Hours are 9am-4:30pm daily, with extended hours in summer (9 am to 6 pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day).  
   **Fee:** $3 per person age 16 and up; Children free

   [http://www.nps.gov/grsa/](http://www.nps.gov/grsa/)

   **Site characteristics:**
   - **The story** – The Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve protects and interprets the Great Sand Dunes and the larger ecosystem, as well as the history and culture of the surrounding region.
   - **The site** – Visitor Center, trails, primitive campgrounds. Visitors are encouraged to hike the dunes and Mosca Creek. Official trailheads (Montville Nature Trail and Mosca Pass Trail) are accessed through the Park one half mile north of Park Headquarters on the east side of the road. Pamphlets for the self-guided Montville Trail are available at the Visitor Center. The Mosca Pass Trail is a 3.5 mile trail that winds through aspen and evergreens to the summit of Mosca Pass in the Sangre de Cristo mountains. It is interpreted as the entrance to the valley for nomadic hunters, Spanish soldiers, homesteaders, and traders carrying goods bound for Plains Indian tribes. A shorter hike is offered via the self-guided Montville Trail, a half-mile loop that parallels Mosca Creek and leads past the remnants of a historic toll station.
   - **The current visitor experience** – The visitor center offers a 20 minute orientation movie and interactive exhibits. Free nature walks, short talks, and evening programs are offered most days spring through fall.
   - **Visitor services** – Gift shop, restrooms at Visitor Center, meals and lodging available at nearby Great Sand Dunes Oasis (camping, restaurant, store, and 2-room motel) and the Great Sand Dunes Lodge (both seasonal).

2. **Rio Grande Scenic Railroad**

   Provides train excursions between La Veta (over La Veta Pass and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains) and Alamosa. From Alamosa, passengers can ride the historic “Chile Line” to Antonito, where they can change to the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, or they may take trips to Fir, the Great Sand Dunes National Park, or Monte Vista.

   **Location:** 610 State Ave., Alamosa, CO 81101  
   **Open:** Welcome Center open Summer: 8am - 6pm; Winter: 8am - 5pm.  
   Train excursions run Memorial Day weekend through October 15, with charters available year round. The daily train departs Alamosa for La Veta at 9:00 AM and returns at 5:45 PM, with a two-hour stop in La Veta for lunch and shopping. On weekends the train leaves La Veta for Alamosa at 9 AM and returns at 4:45 PM (2 hrs. for lunch and shopping).

   **Fee:** Welcome Center is free. Train rides: Alamosa-La Veta: Adult: $48; Senior: $43; Child: $33; Dome Car seats: $58; other costs depending upon special promotions.
http://www.riograndescenicrailroad.com

http://www.alamosa.org/travel-tools/colorado-welcome-center-at-alamosa

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – Alamosa was established as a railroad town (Denver & Rio Grande Railroad). Narrow gauge rail made it possible to traverse the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The depot served as the historic Alamosa train depot for the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad.

- **The Site** – The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad depot is located within the historic Alamosa Train Depot (built in 1908-1909), which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It features the depot’s restored architecture and historic railroad memorabilia. The Colorado Welcome Center (Alamosa) also shares the same building. Colorado has 10 Welcome Centers, located in key entrance points across the state. In addition to purchasing tickets for the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, the Center also offers maps, brochures and information on the whole state of Colorado, and specifically the San Luis Valley.

- **The current visitor experience** – Rail excursion (narrated).

- **Visitor services** – Train ticket purchases for a ride on the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, maps, brochures and information on the whole state of Colorado. The Welcome Center is staffed to answer travel questions. Wi-Fi internet, restrooms, gift shop, snack bar.

3. **Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad**

Provides train excursions between Antonito (over the San Juan Mountains) to Chama, New Mexico. Trains are coal-fired, steam operated. Several trip options are available.

Location: 5234 B Hwy 285, Antonito, CO 81120; (719) 376-5483

Open: Operates May through October: Seven days/week. Depending on itinerary, train departs at 10 AM; motorcoach at 8:30 AM; returns late afternoon.

Fee: Fares range from $65-129 (adult), $32.50-39.50 (child) depending on route and seating. There is a selection of 8 train excursions.

http://www.cumbrestoltec.com

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – Interprets the history and geology of the region, with special focus on the ca. 1880 Rio Grande Railroad’s San Juan Extension (also known as the “Chile Line”), which served the silver mining district of the San Juan Mountains. Narrow gauge rails.

- **The Site** – The Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad depot is not historic (the depot, support buildings, and rail yard were built in the 1970s when the new C&TS was created). The historic depot is located further north in the center of town. The rail yard does include historic train locomotives. Engine No. 463 and the rail line itself are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- **The current visitor experience** – Rail excursion (narrated). Self-guided walking tour of the railyards.

- **Visitor services** – Train ticket purchases for a ride on the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, maps, brochures and general visitor information. Restrooms, gift shop, snack bar.
4. Fort Garland Museum

Location: 29477 Highway 159; Fort Garland, CO 81133; 719-379-3512

Open: April–October~Daily, 9 am to 5 pm.
November–March~Thursday–Monday, 10 am to 4 pm.

Fee: Members: Free; Adults: $5.00; Seniors: $4.50; Children (6–16): $3.50; Children (under 6): Free; Group rates available.


Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – Fort Garland served as a U.S. military outpost between the years of 1858-1883. Interpretation covers military history; the contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers (Company G of the Ninth Cavalry) and the command of Kit Carson. Additional interpretative exhibits include: Infantry and Cavalry Barracks, Indo-Hispano culture and a permanent exhibit on preservation efforts at the fort.
- **The Site** – The 19th century adobe fort was restored between 1945-1950 by the Colorado Historical Society. Five of the original 22 buildings are still standing, and a sixth reconstructed building has been added.
- **The current visitor experience** – The Fort offers educational programs and guided tours for both children and adults, as well as wayside exhibits. Historical reenactments.
- **Visitor services** – Restrooms, Gift Shop, Bookstore, Visitor Information, Picnic Area.

5. San Luis Museum and Cultural Center

Location: 401 Church Place; San Luis, CO 81152; (719) 672-3611

Open: Currently closed for renovations. Typically open 7 days/week Summer (Memorial Day - Labor Day), 10 AM - 4 PM; Winter (Labor day - Memorial Day) M-F, 9 AM - 3 PM

Fee: $2.00 per adult; $1.00 Students and Seniors over 65

http://www.museumtrail.org/SanLuisMuseum.asp

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – History of San Luis, La Vega, the People’s Ditch, the oldest family store in the state, local heritage, Hispano culture and settlement.
- **The Site** – Located on a plaza in the San Luis de la Culebra Historic District. The building was originally constructed in 1943 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as an Institute of Arts and Crafts. It was later used as a high school. Museum houses interpretative exhibits and a diorama of the village. Additionally the Museum has a replica of a Penitente Morada, complete with religious objects and Santos (carved saints), and an extensive collection of local art, including traditional embroidery and murals. Much of the original architecture (vigas and fireplace) is still
**Theme-specific Interpretive Sites**

There are other important sites within the Heritage Area that relate to one or more of the overarching themes. Most do not offer regularly scheduled tours and may have irregular hours. While some have signage telling the history of the site, others currently have no interpretation and offer no information sharing.

Some of the theme-specific interpretive sites has the potential to be further enhanced through the use of interpretive tools (such as interpretive signage, small exhibits, or audio) to help tell the story of the Heritage Area.

1. **La Vega and the San Luis People’s Ditch**

   **Location:** South edge of town on the west side of CO Hwy 159 (Main Street); San Luis, CO 81152; (719) 672-3611

   **Open:** N/A. Lands are not open to the general public and may only be viewed from public roads.

   **Fee:** None

   **Site characteristics:**

   - **The Story** – La Vega is the only Mexican-Era land grant commons in Colorado. Continuing to serve its original purpose of communal grazing, La Vega was designated by a 1863 covenant for villagers living in the Rio Culebra Basin. Allocated for seven villages, the commons extended 18 miles south to the New Mexico border at its inception. Though La Vega has dwindled to 500-acres the commons is maintained and managed by local descendants who use the pasture. The San Luis People’s Ditch is an "acequia" (gravity-fed irrigation system). Serving the village of San Luis de la Culebra before Colorado was a Territory, the People's Ditch was initially a shallow hand-dug irrigation channel. Later, oxen pulling a plow widened and extended the ditch. Operating under Water District 24 of Division 3, the People's Ditch holds the first adjudicated water rights in Colorado. The People's Ditch serves 16 "parcientes" (affiliated water users) and irrigates approximately 2100 acres of hay & other row crops. A majority of parcientes are descendants of the original founders of the acequia.

   - **The Site** – Communal pasture land forming the far eastern boundary of the Town of San Luis. The People’s Ditch runs through La Vega, under Main St. and northwest of town (four miles long).

   - **The current visitor experience** – Self-interpreted via stone marker and through interpretive materials at the San Luis Museum and Cultural Center

   - **Visitor services** – N/A

2. **Sacred Circle Tour (Costilla County)**

   **Location:** Various Costilla County communities; 719-672-3685

   **Open:** Church services and public hours vary. Guided tours can be arranged by request.

   **Fee:** None
http://www.sanluispreservation.com/sacred_circle_brochure/

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – The "Sacred Circle Tour" has been arranged by the Costilla County Economic Development Council in collaboration with Sangre de Cristo Parish. It features nine historic churches or missions that help interpret the religious and architectural history of Hispano settlers. It also features Capilla de Todos los Santos (ca. 1986) atop San Pedro Mesa and its associated Stations of the Cross (15 bronze sculptures).

- **The Site** – Nine Historic Churches/Missions:
  - Sts. Peter and Paul, San Pablo
  - San Francisco Mission, San Francisco
  - Immaculate Conception Mission, Chama
  - St. James the Less Mission, Blanca
  - San Isidro Mission, Los Fuertes
  - Holy Family Mission, Fort Garland
  - Sacred Heart Mission, Garcia
  - Sangre de Cristo Parish Church, San Luis
  - San Acacio Mission Church, San Acacio

- **The current visitor experience** – Self-guided via a brochure. No driving route suggested. Guided tours can be arranged by request. Visitors can also climb the half-mile trail to Capilla de Todos los Santos.

- **Visitor services** – N/A. Brochure encourages visitors to patronize the shops and restaurants of Costilla County.

3. **Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and Conejos Plaza**

Location: 6633 County Road 13; Conejos, CO 81129; (719) 376-5985
Open: Open most days; 8 AM - 7 PM in summer
Fee: None

http://www.dioceseofpueblo.com/parishes/City/bcconejos.htm

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – Our Lady of Guadalupe Church is the oldest parish in Colorado. Meeting in a temporary space in 1856, the parish designation was granted in 1859. Construction of the original church commenced in 1863 and was completed in 1866. In 1926 an electrical fire destroyed the church, leaving walls and towers. The adobe towers wererazed in 1948 and replaced with the contemporary brick entrance. Conejos was once a thriving community, but many businesses relocated to nearby Antonito when the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad established that town in 1880.

- **The Site** – The church is situated in Historic Conejos Plaza, the original plaza of the historic community of Conejos, Colorado. The plaza also houses the Conejos County Courthouse, which was built in 1981, replacing an earlier structure that burned. Many of the other historic structures around the plaza date back to the earliest settlers of the area (though most are vacant/abandoned).

- **The current visitor experience** – N/A

- **Visitor services** – N/A. The Church is surrounded by a fenced green space that contains a picnic table.
4. **SPMDTU: Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>601 Main Street; Antonito, CO 81120; (719) 589-5678</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open:</td>
<td>Currently undergoing restoration. Individual tour by appointment may be possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Site characteristics:**

- **The Story** — The SPMDTU represents the civil rights struggles of Hispano settlers in the San Luis Valley. After the forced annexation of Mexican Territory and U.S. violation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which protected property rights of Mexicans living in the Southwest, Hispanics faced racial intolerance and land loss. Patterned after New Mexico mutual aid societies that protected the civil rights of members during industrialization of the Southwest, the Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos (Society for the Mutual Protection of United Workers or SPMDTU) was founded in 1900 in Antonito, Colorado.
- **The Site** — A large two-story building. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **The current visitor experience** — N/A
- **Visitor services** — N/A.

5. **Pike’s Stockade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>7 miles N by NE of Sanford, CO; (719) 379-3512</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open:</td>
<td>The Stockade is not staffed; gate is open 8 AM to 5 PM from Memorial Day to Labor Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Site characteristics:**

- **The Story** — Represents the capture by the Spanish of U.S. Explorer Zebulon Pike, who built a stockade on this site on the banks of the Conejos River in 1807 while exploring in Spanish territory. The journals written during his captivity in Santa Fe and published in the nineteenth century gave an expanding U.S. a hunger for the West.
- **The Site** — Reconstructed stockade. Listed as a National Historic Landmark.
- **The current visitor experience** — Self-interpreted through exhibits; interpreted at the Fort Garland Museum.
- **Visitor services** — Restrooms.

6. **Historic Downtown Alamosa Walking Tour**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>Tour brochures are available at the Alamosa Chamber of Commerce located at US Hwy. 160 W. (Main Street) between Denver and Ross Avenues; Alamosa, CO 81101</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open:</td>
<td>8 AM - 5 PM, M-F. Tour brochures are also available online, at the nearby public library, in downtown stores and restaurants, at the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad depot, and at the Alamosa Welcome Center on Sixth Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – The history and architecture of Alamosa.
- **The Site** – The tour includes 25 historic sites, several designated on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **The current visitor experience** – Self-guided walking tour.
- **Visitor services** – Restrooms at the Chamber office.

7. **Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge**

Location: 9383 El Rancho Lane; Alamosa, CO 81101; (719) 589-4021

Open: Sunrise to sunset. The Visitor’s Center at the Alamosa NWR is open Monday - Friday from March through October when volunteer staff is available.

Fee: None

http://alamosa.fws.gov/

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – Lush wetlands provide year-round habitat for songbirds, water birds, coyotes, deer and other wildlife. Starting in 1962 a series of water works were created in the ANWR to restore some of the wetlands that were common throughout the valley when it was first settled.
- **The current visitor experience** – Self-guided with some wayside exhibits.
- **Visitor services** – Restrooms and visitor information at the AWR visitor center.

8. **Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge**

Location: 6140 County Road 15; Monte Vista, CO 81144; (719) 589-4021

Open: Sunrise to sunset. The Visitor's Center in Monte Vista NWR is volunteer staffed and usually only open in the beginning of March around the time of the Crane Festival. The Visitor's Center at the Alamosa NWR is open Monday - Friday from March through October when volunteer staff is available.

Fee: None

http://alamosa.fws.gov/
http://www.fws.gov/alamosa/PDF/Monte_Vista_NWR_Map.pdf

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – Starting in 1952 a series of water works were created at the MVNWR to restore some of the wetlands that were common throughout the Valley when it was first settled. In March and September, twenty thousand migrating Sandhill Cranes use the refuge as a major stopping point. This migration is one of the Valley's greatest spectacles and is celebrated every spring in early March at the Monte Vista Crane Festival.
- **The Site** – A self-guided driving trail.
- **The current visitor experience** – Self-guided with some wayside exhibits and wildlife viewing areas.
- **Visitor services** – Restrooms and visitor information.
9. **Blanca Wildlife Habitat Area (Blanca Wetlands)**

Location: 11 miles northeast of Alamosa on County Road 2S; Alamosa, CO 81101; (719) 274-8971
Open: Closed February 15 to July 15 for nesting birds.
Fee: None

http://www.alamosa.org/bird-watching

Site characteristics:
- **The Story** – What appears at first glance to be a salty desert environment with flooded low areas reveals to the more studious observer a plethora of birds, amphibians, mammals, fish, and insects.
- **The Site** – Wetlands
- **The current visitor experience** – Self-guided. Wheelchair accessible trails.
- **Visitor services** – Restrooms and visitor information. Picnic area.

10. **Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot**

Location: Front Street near Third Avenue, Antonito, CO 81120; (719) 376-2049
Open: Not open to the public; currently undergoing restoration
Fee: N/A

Site characteristics:
- **The Story** – Listed on the State Register of Historic Properties, the 1880 D&RG Antonito Depot is significant for its native stone masonry. It also played a key role in the establishment of the town of Antonito by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. For over sixty years, the depot was the junction point for the "Chili Line" to Santa Fe, New Mexico and the railroad's San Juan Extension connecting Alamosa to Durango and Silverton. As the western-most station accommodating both narrow and standard gauge trains on the San Juan Extension, the depot was an important terminal for freight, passenger, and package services.
- **The Site** – Not open to the public; currently undergoing restoration.
- **The current visitor experience** – N/A
- **Visitor services** – N/A

11. **Rio Costilla Studio Tour**

Location: Various home, studios, and art galleries in Costilla County.
Open: Annually, two days in September.
Fee: N/A

Site characteristics:
- **The Story** – Group of twenty-five plus artists and craftspeople living in the watershed of the Rio Costilla. Work includes painting, print-making, photography, bronze sculpture, wood and stone carving, fine and rustic furniture, ceramics, African drums, artisan bread-baking, etc.
- **The Site** – Artist homes, studios and galleries are open to the public for two days (10AM-5PM) during September.
- **The current visitor experience** – Open house.
- **Visitor services** – Varies with each tour.
12. Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Locomotive No. 169

Location: Cole Park, just off US Hwy. 160 at Rio Grande bridge; Alamosa, CO 81101
(719) 589-3681
Open: Year-round/outdoor site.
Fee: N/A

Site characteristics:

- **The Story**— Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Alamosa's narrow-gauge locomotive 169 was built in April 1883 by Baldwin Locomotive Works in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After decades of service in the San Luis Valley, the engine was retired in 1938 and later refurbished for display at the 1939 New York World's Fair. A restored coal car and B-1 Business Car (1881) accompany the 169.
- **The Site**— Outdoor pavilion in Cole Park along the Rio Grande.
- **The current visitor experience**— Historic locomotive; interpretive outdoor exhibits.
- **Visitor services**— None.

13. Luther Bean Museum

Location: 208 Edgemont Blvd, Richardson Hall, Rm #256, Adams State College; Alamosa, CO 81102; (719) 587-7151
Open: Summer Hours: Tuesday-Friday 8-4:30pm. Fall/Spring Hours (late Aug-early May): Tuesday-Friday 8-5pm. Closed major holidays and during winter break.
Fee: N/A

http://www.adams.edu/lutherbean

Site characteristics:

- **The Story**— The museum features an eclectic collection of Southwest and European art, artifacts, and local arts and history, including Native American and Hispano Southwest arts, paintings and bronzes by nationally and regionally known artists, and European decorative arts. Also featured is also a collection of memorabilia of the former Colorado Governor and ASC's founder William H. "Billy" Adams.
- **The Site**— College building.
- **The current visitor experience**— Self-guided.
- **Visitor services**— Restrooms.

14. San Luis Lakes State Park

Location: 8 miles east of Mosca, Colorado on County Road 6N; Mosca, CO 81146
(719) 378-2020
Open: Open May thru October. Wildlife area for both the park and State Wildlife Area is closed from Feb. 15th to July 15th to protect nesting waterfowl.
Fee: Daily vehicle pass for State Park: $6. A $10.25 habitat stamp is required for any State Wildlife Area. Habitat stamps can be purchased on-line (www.wildlife.state.co.us) or wherever hunting/fishing licenses are sold.

http://parks.state.co.us/parks/sanluis/
Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – The area features a combination of wetlands, ponds and shallow lakes, fed by intermittent water from springs and creeks. The wetlands attract a variety of ducks, geese, cranes and shorebirds.
- **The Site** – Shrublands of salt grass, greasewood, and rabbitbrush surround Head and San Luis Lakes. The southern one-third of the area is a state park; the northern two-thirds is the State Wildlife Area.
- **The current visitor experience** – Outdoor interpretive exhibits.
- **Visitor services** – Restrooms, wildlife viewing, visitor information, bathing beach and picnic area.

15. **San Luis Valley Museum**

Location: 401 Hunt Avenue; Alamosa, CO 81101; (719) 587-0667

Open: Open 10am - 4pm Tuesday through Saturday year round; Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Fee: Adults $2.00, Students and Children $1.00, and Children under 5 years old Free.


Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – The museum contains memorabilia displaying the area's multicultural heritage representing pioneers, Indians and other settlers of the San Luis Valley. Visitors can see historical photographs, a pioneer schoolroom and Trading Post, and American Indian items, including beautiful, colorful clothing made from hides. Oriental art and a Veterans memorabilia are also on display.
- **The Site** – Museum
- **The current visitor experience** – Self-guided.
- **Visitor services** – Restrooms, gift shop, visitor information.

16. **Zapata Falls Recreation Area**

Location: 3.5 miles east of CO Hwy 150 near the Great Sand Dunes National Park; Mosca, CO 81146; (719) 274-8971

Open: Daylight

Fee: N/A.

[http://www.nps.gov/archive/grsa/zapata_falls.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/grsa/zapata_falls.htm)

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – Zapata Falls features a rock face cut by glaciers and scoured by millennia of rushing water that crashes through a 30 ft. cleft in the rock walls.
- **The Site** – Outdoor site. Day use only. The falls are a half-mile hike from the parking area, where mountain bike and wilderness hiking trails can also be accessed.
- **The current visitor experience** – Self-guided.
- **Visitor services** – Recreation area features restrooms, visitor information, picnic area. No camping.
17. Medano Zapata Ranch

Location: Zapata Ranch, 5305 State Highway 150, Mosca, Colorado 81146; (719) 378-2356
Open: Year round.
Fee: $1995 for 7 nights; $1565 for 5 nights; $985 for 3 nights; reduced rates for children 8 years old and under. Customized prices for corporate retreats, family reunions and business meetings.

http://zranch.org/index.cfm

Site characteristics:

- **The Story** – One of the largest cattle ranches in Colorado, this site represents the history of land ownership and use as it changed from Hispano sheep ranching to Anglo cattle ranching. In the 1860’s Mexican families began settling the Zapata Ranch. Shortly after, Anglo cattlemen began to move into the San Luis Valley. Rivalries developed between the sheep ranchers and cattlemen over the acquisition of the land. Over time, with no legal recourse, the Mexican families sold their land to the Dickey family (or as is the case with Teofilo Trujillo, they were forced out). Soon the Dickey Brothers owned 9,000 acres and acquired leases on 90,000 more. Eventually the ranch was purchased in 1878 by William Adee, and by 1879, a store and post office were established at Zapata Ranch in what is now the headquarter buildings.
- **The Site** – Today the ranch is a 103,000-acre bison and guest ranch owned by the Nature Conservancy and managed through a partnership with the Duke and Janet Phillips Family-- a third-generation ranching family. The site includes the historic Zapata ranch headquarters building and bunkhouse. Both log structures, they have been remodeled to incorporate an indoor dining area and lodging for ranch guests. An old barn has been converted to an education center and meeting room.
- **The current visitor experience** – Working cattle ranch vacations, interpretive tours, horseback riding, photography workshops, and guided hikes.
- **Visitor services** – Lodging, dining. An interpretive trail with waysides is also open to the public along State Highway 150.

Events

The following events occur throughout the Heritage Area

- Semillas de la Tierra Christmas performance
- Mariachi conference and concert,
- Hilos Culturales summer institute
- ASC Hispanic Heritage Days
- Father’s Day Low Rider Car show
- Adobe de Oro Concilio de Artes
- Santa Ana and Santiago Annual Fiestas
- Alamosa Farmers Market
- Monte Vista Crane Festival
- Summerfest on the Rio
- Early Iron Festival Car Show
- Sundays at Six (free summer concert series)
- Alamosa Round-up Rodeo
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APPENDIX G: INTERPRETIVE THEMES (SECTION 5) FROM THE FEASIBILITY STUDY (2005)
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Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Feasibility Study

Assistance in Preparation of this Study Provided by:
Shapins Associates
1818 16th St.
Boulder, CO 80302
section 5

Interpretive Themes

Cultural Event - courtesy of the Colorado Historical Society
INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The unique stories of people and place that the proposed Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (SDCNHA) has to tell the rest of the nation are encompassed by four major themes. These heritage themes capture the essence of the San Luis Valley and reflect events and movements that have been important to the history of the United States. The themes were initially developed by members of the Sangre de Cristo NHA Steering Committee and later refined by committee members and others at a workshop held in March 2005. These themes were selected because they are widespread in the Sangre de Cristo region. There are widespread, well preserved and accessible cultural and natural resources throughout the proposed SDCNHA that represent each selected theme. In this section, each theme is described, its uniqueness is summarized and the outstanding resources that reflect the theme are highlighted.

SANGRE DE CRISTO THEMES

1. An Alpine Valley’s Wind, Water and Sand Dance

2. Land of the Blue Sky People

3. Interwoven Peoples and Traditions

4. Hispano Culture, Folklore, Religion and Language

#1. AN ALPINE VALLEY’S WIND, WATER AND SAND DANCE

Located in the heart of the San Luis Valley, the proposed SDCNHA showcases the delicate interplay of wind, water and sand that have shaped the Valley’s unique landforms and contributed to its biological diversity.

The San Luis Valley is the highest and largest alpine desert valley on the North American continent. Roughly the size of New Hampshire, the valley is the highest elevation in the United States to receive such little precipitation. What makes the desert valley truly unique are its hidden waters. Below the valley are two aquifers that contain an enormous quantity of water – two billion acre-feet. Despite its desert title, the valley contains 230,000 acres of wetlands which represent the most extensive wetland system in the Southern Rocky Mountains. The aquifers feed ponds, artesian wells, springs and lakes within the proposed SDCNHA which are akin to desert oases. This water replenishes the people, landscape, habitats and wildlife of the SDCNHA. Home to globally unique plant and animal species and a migration stopover for many birds, the wetlands and riparian corridors within the proposed SDCNHA teem with wildlife.

The sand dunes of the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve are another natural wonder of the proposed SDCNHA resulting as a consequence of the presence of water in the desert valley. Dunes are shaped and sustained by the dynamic interaction of sand, wind and water. Water flowing from the mountain slopes and water percolating from the valley’s aquifer all contribute to the maintenance of Great Sand Dunes. Cresting at 750 feet above the valley floor, these are the highest dunes on the continent.

Among the remarkable natural resources of the proposed SDCNHA are the vast mountains and the waters that flow from them. Flanking the east side of the proposed SDCNHA, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains rise abruptly from the valley floor well over 14,000 feet. The San Juan Mountains form the western perimeter and gradually rise from the valley to the Continental Divide.
The San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountain ranges are both part of the southern Rocky Mountains. The Sangre de Cristos contain a number of peaks over 14,000 feet, Mt Blanca, located within the study area is the highest at 14,345 feet. The Sangre de Cristos are divided between the Sangre de Cristos themselves in the northern part of the range and the Culebra Range to the south. The convergence and natural diversity of alpine tundra, tall forests of evergreen and aspen, massive desert dunes, spacious grasslands, and verdant montane wetlands in the Sangre de Cristo Range is unique to the North American landscape. Just miles from its headwaters in the San Juan Mountains, the mighty Rio Grande traverses through the SDCNHA as it works its way across the state line and into New Mexico.

The incredible natural resources of the proposed SDCNHA draw a number of visitors. The region is becoming increasingly popular for recreation including hiking, camping, rock climbing, mountain biking, horseback riding, ice climbing, snowmobiling, and backcountry skiing. Given its location in the Rocky Mountain Flyway and its abundance of public lands, the area is especially well-suited for bird watching and other forms of wildlife observation. For many visitors, the geographic isolation of the valley and abundance of public lands provides a coveted place for exploration, adventure and solitude.

**Distinctiveness of theme**
The abundance of water in the Sangre de Cristo NHA distinguishes the area from other alpine valleys in the Rocky Mountains and the Desert Southwest. No other National Heritage Area has explored the role of water in shaping an alpine desert valley's natural wonders and biological diversity. The proposed SDCNHA is a distinctive natural setting where residents and visitors can experience an alpine desert valley with wetlands and stream corridors that are green with life, a stunning mountain backdrop featuring 14,000 foot peaks, and the tallest sand dunes on the continent.

**Related Resources**
Resources that express this theme are outstanding both in quality and quantity. The amount of public land ensures that the natural resources are accessible and highly visible. Natural resources that reveal the "hidden waters" of the Valley include wetlands, playas and artesian wells. The lush stream sides of willow and cottonwoods along the Rio Grande, Conejos River and other clear mountain streams also showcase the habitat virtues of water in a desert valley. Finally, the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is a feature of the SDCNHA that represents the culmination of the Valley's wind, water and sand dance. Other outstanding resources and events associated with this natural heritage theme include the following:

**Federal Lands:**
- 1 National Park (NPS): Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve
- 3 National Wildlife Refuges (USFWS): Baca NWR, Monte Vista NWR, Alamosa NWR
  Every spring, the Monte Vista NWR hosts a Crane Festival which draws thousands to observe and celebrate the sandhill crane migration.
- 1 National Forest (USFS): Rio Grande National Forest
- 2 National Forest Wilderness Areas (USFS): Sangre de Cristo Wilderness, San Juan Wilderness
- 1 Proposed National Natural Landmark (NPS): the Rio Grande
  - BLM Land: Blanca Wetlands Complex, Blanca Special Recreation Management Area (SMRA), Rio Grande SRMA

**State Lands:**
- 15 State Wildlife Areas (SWA): Higel SWA, Playa Blanca SWA, San Luis Lakes SWA, Conejos County Ponds SWA, Conejos River SWA (fishing easement), Hot Creek SWA, La Jara Reservoir SWA, La Jara SWA, Poso SWA, Sego Springs SWA, Terrace Reservoir SWA, Trujillo Meadows SWA, Mountain Home Reservoir SWA, Sanchez Reservoir SWA, Smith Reservoir SWA
- San Luis Lakes State Park

**The Nature Conservancy:**
In 1999, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased the 97,000 acre Baca Ranch, a historic ranch that dates from an 1824
Mexican land grant. The acquisition thwarted a plan to export water from the valley to Front Range communities to the east. The Nature Conservancy currently hosts a number of environmental education and natural history programs and workshops at the Medano-Zapata Ranch.

#2. LAND OF THE BLUE SKY PEOPLE
Interwoven with the proposed SDCNHA’s natural environment is a very long and rich human history. Prehistoric occupation of the proposed SDCNHA began at the end of the last Ice Age over 11,000 years ago. The Utes, the oldest continuous residents of what is now Colorado, arrived in the Sangre de Cristo region as early as 1300 A.D. and their occupation of the valley spans the late prehistoric and early historic time periods. For prehistoric and Native American cultures, the SDCNHA served as a seasonal hunting ground attractive because of its water resources and abundant wildlife. Drawn to the areas water and wildlife, Paleoindian hunters as well as later Archaic hunter-gathers and the Utes congregated in the SDCNHA’s wetland areas. Archeological finds including projectile points, pottery shards and grinding stones suggest that families camped in these areas seasonally.

Around 11,200 years before present (yBP), the earliest known inhabitants, the nomadic hunters and gatherers of the Clovis Complex, were drawn to the Sangre de Cristo region’s abundance of big game animals such as bison and mammoth. Another group of nomadic hunters, the Folsom Complex, were also focused on hunting bison in the Sangre de Cristo region and persisted in the Valley for about 700 years until about 10,200 yBP ending with the extinction of the Bison antiquus. Distinct and crafted fluted Folsom projectile points have been found in prehistoric campsites within the study area. Archeological artifacts reveal prehistoric cultures occupying the valley at various times. Archeological evidence of subsistence patterns of the people of the Archaic Tradition (7,500 – 1,500 yBP) also reveals close ties to the Valley’s natural resources. These people survived by hunting big game species, smaller animals and gathering plants.

Following the Archaic Tradition, the proposed SDCNHA became an important hunting ground for a number of tribes. By 1400 AD, Native American tribes from throughout the region were utilizing the San Luis Valley to some degree. Apache and Navajo came from the north, Pueblo (Tiwa and Tewa) people from the south; Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho traversed the eastern plains; and the Ute people came from the west. From the 1600s to the mid-1800s, it was the Ute Indians that laid claim to the valley in search of game and plants. The crystalline mountain panorama and startling clarity of the sky in the Valley and elsewhere in Colorado, so impressed visiting plains tribesman that they called the Ute the “Blue Sky People”.

Similar to the prehistoric cultures, neither the Utes nor other tribes established permanent settlements in the valley. For the Native American tribes, the Sangre de Cristo region was valued as a seasonal hunting ground where bands of tribes would migrate once the snow melted off the high mountain passes. Native peoples also came to the Valley in search of turquoise, a prized mineral. One of the Valley’s two known prehistoric turquoise mines, the King Mine, is located in the proposed SDCNHA and may be the oldest turquoise mine worked by prehistoric people of North America.

Apart from its abundance of fowl and game, the landscape of the SDCNHA carries special significance for various Native American tribes. Select landscape features in the SDCNHA have long been revered as sacred. For example, the Tewa Pueblo tell stories about the first human beings emerging from the underworld through a hole, a sipapu, in a lake near the Sand Dunes. Mount Blanca, or Sierra Blanca, a landmark within the SDCNHA figures in several Indian legends. For the Navajo, Mount Blanca or Sisnaajini is the sacred mountain of the east that marks the boundary of their world.

Distinctiveness of theme
Human habitation of the San Luis Valley stretches back into distant time and provides a unique opportunity to interpret the nomadic patterns of ancient and native peoples. At the end of the Ice Age when large portions of the
continent were still covered in ice, a corridor of land along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains enabled nomadic hunters from the north to enter the plains. From this point on, the proposed SDCNHA served prehistoric and Native American cultures as a seasonal hunting ground where fowl, game, and edible medicinal plants were bountiful.

Related Resources
A variety of site types associated with prehistoric cultures are found in the area including evidence of prehistoric campsites, animal kill sites, rock enclosures, and stone quarry sites. Numerous cliffs and outcrops around the proposed SDCNHA bear pictographs and petroglyphs recorded by prehistoric and historic native peoples.

Other outstanding archaeological resources are associated with this cultural heritage theme including the following:

- A concentration (100 trees) of peeled ponderosa trees along Medano Creek in Great Sands National Park and Preserve that date from 1815-1846. The inner ponderosa bark was a food staple for the Ute peoples and was used for medicinal properties.
- The historic Medano-Zapata Ranch, managed by The Nature Conservancy, encompasses land that was a Stone Age bison kill site and later a pre-historic Native American camp.
- Linger Folsom site, a bison kill site and Zapata Folsom site, a temporary campsite most-likely associated with the bison kill event. Also, Stewart’s Cattle Guard site, a short-term bison kill and processing site.
- Sacred Landscapes: Mt Blanca, San Luis Lakes (believed to be the location of the Tewa Pueblo’s sipapu)
- Rio Grande Rock Art: Concentrations of petroglyphs and pictographs are clearly visible along the Rio Grande corridor within the proposed SDCNHA.

#3. INTERWOVEN PEOPLES AND TRADITIONS
The proposed SDCNHA is steeped in history - a history of settlement, survival and persistence and claims some notable “firsts”. The first permanent non-Native American settlements in what is now Colorado occurred within the proposed SDCNHA, in 1851 in the town of San Luis. In the same year, a group of Hispanos filed Colorado’s first recorded water right, the San Luis People’s Ditch. More important than these early achievements, however, is the role of the Sangre de Cristo region as a historic crossroad - a place where different peoples have converged for thousands of years. The proposed SDCNHA represents a profound historical, religious and cultural convergence that remains visible in the landscape and can be experienced through the area’s development patterns, art, food, lodging and events. Here the traditions of Hispanics, Native American, Mormon, Amish, Japanese-American, and Anglos have intermingled and persisted.

Historically, mountain passes served as the gateway to the San Luis Valley. Utes, explorers, Midwestern homesteaders, Japanese Americans, and railroads all arrived in the valley via openings in the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan mountain ranges. Each of the newcomers regardless of the era of their arrival left a story that can be interpreted through the landscape.

While traveling through the proposed SDCNHA, a visitor will be struck by the authenticity of the region’s cultural landscape. Visitors can experience numerous historic Hispano communities such as San Luis, the oldest continuously occupied town in Colorado, with its plaza, vegas, adobe structures, fine churches, local artifacts, authentic restaurants and B & B’s. On the same trip visitors can see the historic Mormon towns of Manassa and Sanford that illustrate the tightly gridded streets and clustered homes of the early settlers and pass through the numerous railroad towns that sprang up during the 1920s. Fertile agricultural fields, if interpreted, could help one understand why Japanese-Americans moved into the area to operate highly productive truck farms. Throughout the proposed SDCNHA, visitors see vast expanses of rangeland and get a sense for what western cattle ranches are like.

Other groups that have helped settle the area include the Dutch, whose descendents
live in the Waverly District located southwest of Alamosa. Dutch Colonial Revival Architecture is found throughout the proposed area. Displaced farmers from eastern Colorado who were relocated by the government during the Great Depression also settled in the area. Due, in part, to the excellent quality of the agricultural land, the acceptance of diversity and the remoteness of the area numerous Amish families have recently moved to the Valley. These new arrivals attest to the persistent attractiveness of the lands and quality of life within the proposed SDCNHA and add yet another layer to the diverse mix of people and traditions.

Land Grants & Early Settlement Patterns
Large Mexican land grants laid the foundation for the settlement of the proposed SDCNHA. Land grants made by the Mexican governments in 1843 and 1844 were intended as incentives to encourage permanent settlement and increase the population and productivity of the what is today considered the Southwest. The land grants were noteworthy in size. For example, the Sangre de Cristo grant (represented today by the boundary of Costilla County) was nearly one million acres and was the largest privately held parcel of land ever to exist in Colorado. U.S. Geologic Survey maps of the area still reveal the boundary of the Sangre de Cristo and the Baca grants – the Sangre de Cristo grant has been broken down into private land parcels while the Baca Grant has recently been acquired by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and was transferred to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Park Service (NPS) and the US Forest Service (USFS) to form the Baca National Wildlife Refuge (Baca NWR). This action forming the Baca NWR, created the Great Sand Dunes National Park and made additions to the Rio Grande National Forest.

Early settlement patterns were rooted in Spanish agricultural traditions and were shaped in response to the Valley’s geographical features and encounters with Native American tribes. Indian raids were a constant threat and settler clustered together in small villages around a traditional plaza rather than homesteading alone on their land. In keeping with Spanish traditions, land grant settlers laid fields out in long, narrow strips from 55 to 1000 feet long in fertile valley bottoms for cultivation. A combination of privately and publicly owned land characterized these early settlements. Settlers typically constructed their homes around a central plaza and reserved the most prominent lots for churches and government buildings. Individual plots usually filled the irrigatable land leaving pastures, hillsides, and watering places to be held in common for livestock, gathering, timber harvesting and other uses.

Irrigation was always a priority for the settlers, and the construction of irrigation ditches, or acequias to irrigate wheat, beans, corn and vegetable gardens followed settlement. The plazas and irrigation ditches that characterize these early settlements are still evident on the landscape today.

It was not until the U.S. government took control of the region in 1846 from Mexico and provided additional protection from Native Americans that typical homesteading where ranchers lived on their ranch holdings took place. Ranching and farming initiated through these large land grants remains a mainstay of the rural economy and the open expanses of agricultural land continue to characterize the valley landscape.

Railroads & Mines
Railroads and mines were integral economic activities in the late nineteenth century after the United States government acquired control of the San Luis Valley from Mexico. Following the 1859 discovery of gold in Colorado development of the San Luis Valley escalated. Precious metals, gold and silver found in isolated pockets in the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan Mountains attracted prospectors. With the miners came railroads, farms and cattle ranches. By 1878, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad had descended into the valley to Alamosa from La Veta Pass. Subsequent railroad lines linked Alamosa to Española, New Mexico and Antonito to Chama, New Mexico. As a result of the railroad that continued to build lines through the end of the nineteenth century, towns such Antonito grew and flourished.

From Antonito, the “Chili Line” once
provided a link to Taos and Española to the south while other lines connected the area to Alamosa and points further north and east. Here the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has vintage steam-powered locomotives and wooden passenger cars that wind through spectacular scenery as it traverses the San Juan Mountains on route to Chama, New Mexico. Visitors can ride for 64 miles along the same narrow gauge route that the Rio Grande Railroad used to serve the silver mines of Southwest Colorado. At Cumbres Pass, the Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway and the railroad rise over 10,000 feet and provide exhilarating views through the mountains, meadows and woodlands that have remained virtually unchanged for over 120 years.

19th Century U.S. Military Forts
Before any permanent settlements were established in the San Luis Valley, Mexico ceded all of the Southwest to the United States as a result of the Mexican War of 1846. The Utes did not recognize the United States newly acquired control of the Valley and disrupted early settlements. The government recognized that if the fledgling Mexican settlements were to survive, a military presence was essential. The military built two permanent forts in the proposed SDCNHA, Fort Massachusetts (1852) and Fort Garland (1858). Fort Massachusetts was quickly rendered ineffective and was abandoned, today only ruins remain at its site. The forts consolidated and solidified the new government’s expansionist ideas. Unlike Spain and Mexico, the U.S. was intent on realizing its “Manifest Destiny” and would use a military presence to ensure that its newly acquired land was settled properly.

The forts are further evidence of the blending of cultures as the U.S. military fort construction reflects the adobe vernacular architecture of the Hispano settlers. Residents of the Culebra River Villages were hired to construct Fort Garland and instruct the soldiers on adobe construction and maintenance. Fort Garland opened in 1858 and was occupied by the military for 25 years, closing in 1883. Kit Carson commanded the fort for a period, and helped shape peace with Chief Ouray and the Utes. Fort Garland is also noteworthy because one of the two African American military regiments, the 9th Calvary, was stationed at Fort Garland in 1875-76.

Uniqueness
The degree to which historic settlement patterns remain visible in the landscape of the San Luis Valley is unique among National Heritage Areas. Additionally, old ways of working the land are still employed in the proposed SDCNHA and continue to be passed down through generations of farmers and ranchers as evidenced by the ubiquitous presence of irrigation ditches. Despite the advent of the pivot, a modern-day irrigation device, acequias and flood irrigation remains the operational standard in the Sangre de Cristo region.

Related Resources
The mix of cultural traditions remains visible and easily accessible in the proposed SDCNHA. In fact, Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway, a 129-mile stretch of Colorado highway links many of the key cultural resources in the proposed SDCNHA. An interpreted drive through the area will bring to life the different settlement eras. Some notable places that evoke the layered history and traditions of the proposed SDCNHA include:

- Antonito, home to the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad Depot. The Cumbres & Toltec Railroad was built in the 1880s as and extension of the Rio Grande Railroad that served the silver mines of southwestern Colorado. Today, visitors can ride in the original rail cars, powered by the steam-powered locomotives, on a 64-mile scenic tour to Chama, New Mexico. The train weaves its way through the San Juan Mountains, crossing the state border 11 times along its route.
- Centennial ranches (i.e. Gonzales Farm and Rio Culebra Ranch). Medano-Zapata Ranch, managed by The Nature Conservancy is a historic ranch and very valuable water rights that date from the 1824 Mexican land grant.
- Early Hispano settlements such as San Luis, Antonito, People’s Ditch (acequia)
- Historic Mormon settlements such as
Manassa and Sanford
- Military structures such as Pike's Stockade and Fort Garland

#4. HISPANO CULTURE
A cradle of Colorado history lying at the intersection of the Hispano Southwest and the Anglo Rocky Mountain West, the proposed SDCNHA is culturally unique among National Heritage Areas. Today the San Luis Valley exists as a recognizable subcategory of western culture. Valley settlers have clung to traditions much longer than other Coloradans and, as a result, the San Luis Valley has endured as an alternative to the Rocky Mountain culture. The flavor and character of Hispano culture thrives in the SDCNHA. Main streets lined with murals, historic adobe churches and delicious tamales all represent the unique Hispano stamp of the San Luis Valley. The proposed SDCNHAs art, language, architecture, folklore and traditions remain evocative of the region's early Spanish colonists and Mexican settlers.

The greater endurance of traditional values and practices in the Sangre de Cristo region may be attributed to the geographic isolation of the valley. The resiliency of the area residents and their willingness to adapt, but not fully assimilate to modern ways also lends the area a special character. Residents of the proposed SDCNHA and their ancestors have clung steadfastly to their traditional culture and continue to resist the influences of newcomers. Time-honored Hispano traditions and lifestyles that have been passed on through the generations remain integral to modern day living in the region.

Religion
From the earliest days of settlement, religion was a central facet of life in the San Luis Valley. Churches and murals throughout the area attest to the strong faith of the settlers as well as the modern-day adherence to sacred traditions. Among the historic churches is, Our Lady of Guadalupe located just south of Conejos. John Lamy, the first bishop of Santa Fe, oversaw its construction in the 1850s making it the oldest parish in Colorado.

The story of Los Hermanos Penitentes (commonly known as the Penitentes) is rooted in Hispano traditions and remains a part of the area's landscape today. This religious and fraternal order arrived in the New World from Spain at the time of the conquistadors and eventually sent brothers into the San Luis Valley because of the region's remote location and lack of Catholic priests. The brotherhood has played a role in nearly every Hispanic community in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado since 1850. In addition to substituting for resident clergy and undertaking spiritual matters, the brothers also took responsibility for the charitable and economic needs among their communities. The brothers' meeting places, Moradas, traditional simple adobe structures are found within the study area and some are still in use.

Music, Art, Architecture
Hispano influences can also be found in the area's music, arts, and architecture. Hispano music is a mixture of Spanish classical sounds melded with native instruments and rhythms to create a Indo-Hispano music. More traditional Mexican Mariachi bands are also found in the proposed SDCNHA. Along with music comes dancing and Spanish Colonial folk dances are well preserved and still practiced in the area.

Local festivals and events are a deep expression of the area's Hispano traditions that take place throughout the year in this area. Ceremonies, pilgrimages and festivals such as the Santa Ana and Santiago Festival are more than 150 years old and are still active today. Like the festivals, much of the art in the area is based on religious traditions. For example, artisans in the proposed SDCNHA still create religious icons such as Santero carvings and ¾ size bronze "the Stations of the Cross" statues.

Other art traditions include weaving, a craft that arose during the heyday of sheep ranching in the Valley. Weavings from the proposed SDCNHA are nationally famous and include Eppie Archuleta's traditional Rio Grande Weaving style.

Finally, the area's historic towns showcase the traditional adobe style of architecture.
Churches and civic buildings built in this style are evidence of the influence of Hispano traditions and sit in contrast to the rail road towns like Alamosa that contain mostly brick buildings.

San Luis, Colorado’s oldest continuously inhabited community was established by Hispano settlers in 1851 and stands as an excellent demonstration of Hispano culture. The town’s architecture, food, layout and religious structures all reflect the traditions of the early settlers.

Language
The Spanish language of the area’s first colonists remains the dominant language in the proposed SDCNHA. Remarkably, the geographic isolation of the San Luis Valley has ensured that pure Castilian Spanish of Spain’s royal court is still spoken in certain remote villages of the Sangre de Cristo region. More common, however, is a Spanish dialect that reveals the slow mixing of culture over time as Castilian and Mexican Spanish and, in some cases, English have all blended.

Uniqueness of theme
The residents of the proposed SDCNHA, many of them descendents of the original settlers, proudly share many Hispano traditions including recipes for distinctive dishes, traditional farming techniques and religious celebrations. The Sangre de Cristo region is an attractive destination for heritage tourists in search of an opportunity to experience authentic Hispano culture. Despite changes in political jurisdiction – from Spanish to Mexican to United States control, the roots of the earliest settlers are still in tact.

Related Resources
The clarity and pervasiveness of Hispano culture in the proposed SDCNHA can not be overstated. The area’s Hispano heritage is accessible and readily apparent to the visitor entering the Sangre de Cristo region. While the flavor of Hispano culture is palpable in communities throughout the proposed SDCNHA, two towns in particular are noteworthy for their rich cultural heritage – San Luis and Antonito. These historic Hispano towns and their surrounding villages contain moradas, historic placitas (plazas), historic churches, artwork, authentic cuisine and regularly host festivals and religious celebrations.

Suitability of the Themes
SDCNHA reveals a number of stories and interpretive themes that are not currently interpreted by other national heritage areas. Together, these themes represent a unique aspect of American heritage worthy of recognition, preservation, interpretation, celebration and use. The interpretive themes of the proposed SDCNHA possess the qualities of good storytelling; they are engaging and understandable without qualifications or special terminology. The stories are tangible; their characters are reflective of the abundant natural and cultural resources found in the landscape. The themes also lend themselves to expansion. Within each theme are numerous sub-themes that overtime can be called upon to more profoundly convey the stories of the Sangre de Cristo region.

Relation to the NPS Thematic Framework
The Sangre de Cristo NHA themes fit within the Thematic Framework adopted by the National Park Service in 1994 for interpreting the role of historic sites in American history. Of the eight major historic themes that the NPS identified to represent the diverse aspects of our nation’s history, the proposed SDCNHA’s heritage resources fit mainly in the following NPS categories:

1. Peopling Places
2. Expressing Cultural Values
3. Developing the American Economy
4. Transforming the Environment

The San Luis Valley is undeniably unique, and the proposed SDCNHA possesses qualities that distinguish it from Colorado and the Rocky Mountain West. The proposed National Heritage Area and its interpretive themes capture an aspect of our country’s story that has not yet been interpreted and celebrated by other national heritage areas.

REFERENCES
NATURAL RESOURCES - Proposed Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Our Traditions Live On
The Counties of Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla
APPENDIX H: Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Sample Implementation Guide for Annual Work Planning

The following is an illustration of a three-year implementation guide for annual work planning and is intended to assist the Board of Directors and staff in considering priorities, phasing, and short-term objectives for the many strategic objectives and actions described in the management plan. This illustration assumes that the following are top priorities:

- Encouraging communities to undertake historic preservation and community revitalization planning and projects that will save important historic resources and provide the economic impetus for community improvements.

- Undertaking a wide variety of heritage area-wide interpretive initiatives to achieve greater visibility and enhanced interpretive presentations for residents and visitors. These initiatives will focus on interpreting communities and the natural landscape. Community interpretation through oral history is a possibility (and described in Chapter 6), but not an early focus given the large number of high-priority activities identified in the plan.

- Connecting local culture and interpretive attractions with the local school system (seven districts), to ensure that the next generation is prepared to become stewards of the magnificent legacy of the National Heritage Area.

- Emphasizing interpretation of the natural landscape, to include enhancing and expanding (1) public access to that landscape on public lands and through community-based recreational initiatives, and (2) available information about recreational opportunities on public lands. The heritage area’s focus, however, is on interpretive presentation and visitor information.

- Ensuring that the visitor is warmly welcomed and has a great experience, whether encountering businesses, attractions, public services, event participants, or simply someone on the street or at a shop.

- Marketing the heritage area in parallel to development of interpretive presentation, focusing first on residents and audiences at existing attractions and events, then on nearby “drive markets,” and later seeking a wider audience through national and international recognition. Many interpretive activities are considered to be partly marketing in nature, such as the heritage area’s website.

- Seeking visibility. Achieving wider recognition of the national importance of the unique heritage of the southern San Luis Valley must be a focus of all of the heritage area’s communications, whether with residents or visitors, through marketing and interpretation, or through simple, standard ways of reaching out to the public. While marketing may be designed to increase the number of visitors to the San Luis Valley, this point is a wider one, that the National Heritage Area should be understood by one and all to be a special place worthy of exploration and stewardship.

- Creating a Partner Development Program that acknowledges that many of the activities that the National Heritage Area can and will undertake will build the capabilities of stakeholders who can help to implement this plan, and ensuring (1) that this approach is deliberately reinforced as programs are designed that achieve one or more strategic objectives, and (2) that partners understand this relationship and its multiple benefits. Grants should be understood to be a part of this program, but not the only part. Partners are stakeholders in the San Luis Valley with the ability to influence the implementation of the plan, and include local governments, community groups, interpretive attractions (local, state, and federal), and many specialized organizations supporting the arts, education, history, recreation, and conservation.
Building relationships with a wide variety of actors that can assist in the implementation of this plan. Specifically mentioned here are local governments, local economic development agencies, organizations and agencies supporting historic preservation, educational institutions, and elected officials.

Chapters 4 & 9 • Phased Implementation – Historic Preservation and Community Revitalization

All Strategic Objectives for Historic Preservation

- Connect with federal and state initiatives
- Continue to inventory and study historic resources
- Provide regional leadership in developing public appreciation, advocacy, technical information, and training to encourage local action
- Provide technical assistance and financial support

All Strategic Objectives for Community Revitalization

- Establish a community revitalization program for communities to develop individual plans and programs
- Encourage communities to use community interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their community revitalization plans
- Establish a quality assurance program to recognize the efforts of participating visitor service providers and interpretive sites
- Create a San Luis Valley/Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brand for local products representative of local character and culture
- Encourage local entrepreneurs

CONCEPT: Develop programs in support of the Community Revitalization Program, in tandem with an emphasis on historic preservation, recognizing where elements of the Partner Development Program overlap and working to reinforce these. Emphasize the importance of historic preservation, interpretation, and heritage tourism in Community Revitalization Plans for Cornerstone and Valley Communities. For smaller communities especially (aiming for Heritage Community status), consider projects to support community memory and pride in heritage, with guidance from Chapter 6. Community Revitalization Plans are described in Chapter 9, sidebar on p. 9-xx.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity – Chapters 4 &amp; 9</th>
<th>Year One</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community Revitalization Program</td>
<td>- Work with the four proposed Cornerstone Communities on prototype Community Revitalization Plans customized to their interests and capabilities based on strategies, programs, and actions outlined in the management plan</td>
<td>- Refine process for developing Community Revitalization Plans</td>
<td>- Continue developing Community Revitalization Plans</td>
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<td>- Identify implementation projects for National Heritage Area support in accordance with heritage area goals, principles, and processes, focusing on interpretation and heritage tourism</td>
<td>- Choose four additional communities of varying sizes and with varying goals as demonstration communities to continue developing examples. Consider including a community to the north of Alamosa as a fifth entrance community (Meet with other communities to begin dialogue about projects and goals)</td>
<td>- Create a Community Revitalization Grant Program to support participating communities in the development and implementation of Community Revitalization Plans (Both are Partner Development Programs)</td>
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<td>- Work with partnering organizations to identify and obtain resources, including</td>
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<td>Activity — Chapters 4 &amp; 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Revitalization Program, cont’d</td>
<td>• Encourage towns with historic commercial areas to plan governmental investment and programs for encouraging private investment and improving the visitor experience (All are Partner Development Programs)</td>
<td>funding and technical assistance, that can be used to help develop, support, and implement approved Community Revitalization Plans (All are Partner Development Programs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community entry signs</td>
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<td>Create a system of community entry signs to support the National Heritage Area’s community designation program</td>
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<td>Technical assistance to communities for planning</td>
<td>Provide technical assistance to communities for planning initiatives and particular projects where appropriate, as possible and needed outside the focus on Community Revitalization Plans (Partner Development Program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning tools for communities</td>
<td>Assess needs for planning tools as Community Revitalization Plans are prepared</td>
<td>• Create a program to assist communities in developing planning tools to guide good decision-making in preserving historic resources and community character (Partner Development Program) • Encourage communities to consider and adopt planning processes and techniques that strengthen communities and enhance community character</td>
<td>Continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community preservation and cultural resource plans</td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage and assist counties and local communities with preparation and implementation of preservation and cultural resource plans (Partner Development Program)</td>
<td>Continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local economic development agencies</td>
<td>Build relationships and explore ways to identify place-based development strategies for older commercial areas of mutual interest (Partner Development Program)</td>
<td>• Obtain planning resources, training, and assistance for communities (Partner Development Program) • Develop a training program in tax and funding strategies for historic preservation and rehabilitation options for property owners, real estate and commercial business salespeople, real estate advisors, and others who can influence commercial development in older buildings</td>
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### Activity – Chapters 4 & 9

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<tr>
<td>Nonprofit, statewide, and national organizations</td>
<td>Build relationships and explore ways to obtain planning resources, training, and assistance for local communities (Partner Development Program)</td>
<td>Look for and seize opportunities to encourage partners and outside organizations to develop cooperative programs, including use of National Heritage Area grants (Partner Development Program)</td>
<td>Evaluate existing efforts and ensure that a range of resources are available to partners, including National Heritage Area workshops as needed (Partner Development Program)</td>
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</table>
| Bricks-and-mortar preservation and rehabilitation projects | • Encourage, facilitate, and support partners  
• Help coordinate, seek funding for, and organize technical assistance for the planning and implementation of projects by partners and the private sector (Activities that are part of both Community Revitalization and Partner Development programs) | Continue | Continue |

### Chapter 5 • Phased Implementation – Conservation & Recreation

All Strategic Objectives for Conservation and Recreation
- Forge close ties and partnerships with federal, state, and regional land stewardship entities
- Build public awareness through interpretation
- Build visibility of existing opportunities and encourage public access
- Encourage public access through recreation-related business development
- Support planning and development of local and regional recreational trail networks
- Support watershed restoration efforts
- Monitor Solar Energy Zones Development Initiatives

CONCEPT: Focus on building relationships and supporting the efforts of public agencies and nonprofit organizations to preserve natural and water resources and provide public access, focusing as appropriate and planned with partners on public information, public access, interpretation, and recreational trails at both the local and the larger regional levels. Provide a forum for tracking conservation needs, especially for solar energy.

### Activity – Chapter 5

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| Interpretation of the natural landscape | • In partnership with local, state, and federal agencies and focusing on public lands, begin planning for a comprehensive program for enhanced interpretation of the National Heritage Area’s natural landscape  
• Consider desirability of a public lands visitor center and/or other advanced ways to inform visitors about access to public lands and available recreational programs | • Continue planning  
• Select demonstration projects and initiate work on some projects  
• Begin early implementation of actions identified in planning; possibilities include landscape guides and exhibits, site interpretation, driving tours and themed itineraries, digital content, and other activities as appropriate. (Consider recommendations in the | With partners, seek funding and begin full implementation as funding becomes available (Partner Development Program) |
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<tr>
<td>Interpretation of the natural landscape, cont’d</td>
<td>management plan for working with guides and outdoor entrepreneurs)</td>
<td>Continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visitor information</td>
<td>Work with partners to develop and maintain a comprehensive map and listing of publicly accessible lands and recreational sites and amenities. Ensure that this information is available in print form and electronically via the heritage area’s website</td>
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<td>Local recreational trails</td>
<td>• Enable a more extensive trail and interpretive network on the Alamosa Ranch • Support implementation of the Costilla County open space and trails plan developed with the NPS (Both are Partner Development Programs)</td>
<td>Work with county and local governments to encourage communities to undertake trail plans and develop trail projects, particularly where they can promote heritage tourism and environmental education goals. Incorporate as appropriate into Community Revitalization Plans (Partner Development Program)</td>
<td>Continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional public access to trails, fishing, and boat access</td>
<td>Support San Luis Valley Great Outdoors in updating the “Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan” of 1996 to expand public access along Rio Grande rivers for trails, fishing, and boat access</td>
<td>• Select demonstration projects and initiate work on some projects • Begin early implementation of actions identified in planning (Both are Partner Development Programs)</td>
<td>With partners, seek funding and begin full implementation as funding becomes available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public outreach and marketing</td>
<td>• Promote existing and planned trail projects and planning studies through heritage area media outlets • Work with partners to advertise special trail events and educational programs (Both are Partner Development Programs)</td>
<td>Continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solar energy development on public lands</td>
<td>Monitor Solar Energy Zones Development Initiatives in consultation with partners</td>
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</table>
Chapter 6 • Phased Implementation – Conserving Community & Traditions

All Strategic Objectives for Conserving Community & Traditions

- Promote heritage pride and community memory
- Engage communities through arts, folk music and dance, cultural programs and events, and enrolling volunteers
- Engage educational institutions
- Undertake programs for youth education and leadership development
- Engage agriculture’s cultural ties and possibilities

CONCEPT: Focus program development specifically on enhancing public schools’ recognition and use of local culture and sites as educational resources and enlisting the assistance and resources of higher education institutions in caring for community culture.

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| **Local school districts** | • Build relationships and explore how to identify ways in which the seven local school districts can plan and develop programs that use local resources as a basis for education to meet state standards (Partner Development Program)  
• Build relationships with various groups related to public schools (districts, superintendents, teachers, parent-teacher groups, students and student groups, and other service organizations involved in the schools)  
• Undertake planning as appropriate, using it to continue to build relationships and explore ideas; identify projects to connect education and local culture | As appropriate, establish an advisory committee or working group to steer the planning and development of National Heritage Area programs | Evaluate existing efforts and ensure that a range of resources are available to partners |
| **Projects to connect education and local culture** | | Help establish a scholastic honors program or special prizes to encourage high school students to undertake special projects in research, interpretation, conservation, the arts, local government, and other subjects | (NOTE: the Junior Ranger program listed with Chapters 7 & 8 should be considered one of these) |
| **Higher education** | Build relationships and explore opportunities for collaboration with Adams State University and Trinidad State Junior College; document possibilities as appropriate (Partner Development Program) | Support higher educational institutions’ initial projects (possibilities are listed for Year Three, but not limited to these) (Partner Development Program) | • Recruit student applicants for partners’ intern and apprentice programs  
• Develop a comprehensive program of research into and preservation of cultural traditions  
• Encourage higher education institutions (and others in the museum field) to offer training in |
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<td>Higher education, cont’d</td>
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<td>accessioning, cataloging, and conservation standards to staff and volunteers of museums and other cultural sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral history</td>
<td>Support existing oral history programs and other partner programs in documenting the history and the stories of the Valley’s many cultures (Partner Development Program)</td>
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<td>Investigate existing oral history projects and training programs designed to explore personal heritage</td>
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| | | | Use successful programs and techniques as the basis for establishing standards and procedures for collecting individual “Community Memory” contributions  
(Note: From Year One, anticipate the possibility of this project in discussions with communities about Community Revitalization Plans (smaller communities may wish to focus their planning on community-building and preservation of traditions instead of public interpretation or efforts focused on tourism and commerce) |
| Publicity for cultural events | • Coordinate the publicizing of cultural events and programs in the many media vehicles managed by heritage area partners, including the heritage area’s website, newsletters, and press releases  
• Explore and employ ways to reach residents who do not have access to a computer | Continue | Continue |
| Recognition program | | | • Create a program to recognize volunteers and their contributions to the National Heritage Area and its partners  
• Create a recognition program to celebrate educational programming and teachers who incorporate local culture and resources into their courses |
Chapters 7 & 8 • Phased Implementation – Heritage Tourism & Interpretation

All Strategic Objectives for Interpretation

- Create a coordinated heritage area-wide interpretive presentation of landscapes and sites
- Enable participating communities to tell their own stories in individual ways
- Support interpretive partners’ development
- Enable experiences of the natural landscape (ideas for this objective in this work plan appear under Chapter 5)

All Strategic Objectives for Heritage Tourism & Marketing

- Develop a single, heritage area-wide graphic identity and messaging campaign
- Leverage connections to the National Park Service and Great Sand Dunes National Park
- Encourage a welcoming culture of hospitality
- Fully inform visitors
- Reach out to those who can help spread the word (public relations and targeted marketing)
- Support festivals and events

CONCEPT: Beginning with residents and existing visitors, the interpretive program should seek to broaden its audience over time. Similarly, heritage tourism activities should include efforts to reach markets to build audiences, also beginning with residents and existing visitors. Once a base level of efforts in both interpretation and tourism is in place, additional activities can be added gradually to significantly expand and enhance the heritage area’s presentation and marketing and improve the visitor experience as a whole. The heritage area and partners should implement a phased plan to develop a **base level of coordinated interpretive presentation over a three year period**.

Beginning with residents and existing visitors, the interpretive program should seek to broaden its audience over time. Once a base level experience is in place, additional interpretation can be added gradually to significantly expand and enhance the heritage area presentation.

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| **Graphic identity and messaging strategy** | Finalize graphic identity and messaging strategy | • Complete Style Guide  
• Create brochure design templates using graphic identity and messaging strategy | Monitor partners’ use of graphic identity and messaging guidelines in the Style Guide |
<p>| <strong>Seasonal Visitor Guide</strong> | Launch yearly seasonal Visitor Guide as a Create a yearly seasonal guide in an inexpensive fold-out, newspaper format on high quality paper similar to Great Sand Dunes guide. (See Chapter 8 recommendations.) Include interpretive content including introduction of interpretive themes, identification of touring route, and identification of visitor-ready interpretive sites and self-guided exhibits | Revise and update the yearly seasonal Visitor with additional interpretive content as appropriate. (See Ch8 recommendations.) | Revise, update, and expand the yearly seasonal Visitor Guide into a more permanent format with updated and additional interpretive content as appropriate. (See Ch8 recommendations.) |
| <strong>Los Caminos Antiguos</strong> | Design and install additional exhibits along Los Caminos Antiguos. | Continue 2012-awarded project | Continue to enhance the Byway (Complete installation of exhibits along Los Caminos Antiguos if not already completed by spring 2014) |</p>
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<tr>
<td>Interpretive sites</td>
<td>Begin to coordinate interpretation, presentation, calendars, and publicity at existing interpretive sites</td>
<td>Install orientation kiosks, publish community brochures, and undertake interpretive/revitalization planning</td>
<td>Install additional interpretive exhibits and programming in Cornerstone Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cornerstone Communities</td>
<td>(See also Chapters 4 &amp; 9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other communities</td>
<td>Begin to engage additional communities in interpretive opportunities and planning</td>
<td>Begin to interpret other interested communities through brochures, web content, and onsite exhibits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural resource interpretation</td>
<td>(See also actions in Chapter 5)</td>
<td>• Begin implementing interpretive opportunities associated with SLV Great Outdoors Initiative&lt;br&gt;• Undertake planning and fundraising with state and federal agencies for a back country trails interpretive and recreational initiative</td>
<td>Begin implementing maps, information, and exhibits for back-country trails.</td>
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<td>Other publications in “family of publications”</td>
<td>• Work with partners to create family of heritage area publications using brochure design templates&lt;br&gt;• Prepare a heritage area-wide interpretive map as the centerpiece of the heritage area family of interpretive publications</td>
<td>• Work with partners to create family of heritage area publications using brochure design templates&lt;br&gt;• Work on distribution and dissemination strategies for heritage area brochures and publications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itineraries</td>
<td>Identify a first set of themed itineraries for development</td>
<td>Develop and promote first set of themed itineraries</td>
<td>Continue itineraries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>Create Passport stamp/program</td>
<td>Continue to support and expand the passport program</td>
<td>Continue</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Begin enhancing the website with downloadable maps and interpretive content, incorporating identity and messaging strategy</td>
<td>Continue to develop website interpretive content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Publicity for events</td>
<td>Establish a web-based annual calendar of events at communities and at individual attractions</td>
<td>Continue to support and expand the calendar of events on the web; consider expansion to other outreach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital world</td>
<td>• Launch social media presence using graphic identity and messaging strategy&lt;br&gt;• Register attractions and visitor services as listed destinations for GPS navigation systems</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expand social media outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations and marketing</td>
<td>PR and marketing outreach to residents and current visitors at heritage area attractions</td>
<td>PR and marketing outreach extends to include targeted domestic drive markets</td>
<td>• PR and marketing outreach extends to targeted domestic (fly/drive) and international audiences&lt;br&gt;• Partner on coop advertisements</td>
</tr>
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<td>Activity – Chapters 7 &amp; 8</td>
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| Public relations and marketing, cont’d | | | in targeted domestic and international markets
- Offer a familiarization (“fam”) tour for travel writers |
| Junior Ranger program | | | Launch Junior Ranger program for local schools’ use as well as visitors |
| Hospitality training | | Launch hospitality training | Continue to offer hospitality training programs and refresher courses |
| National Heritage Area entrance signs | Pursue CDOT entrance sign in Costilla County to be installed in a prominent location after La Veta Pass | Install other entrance signs at major gateways to the heritage area | Continue |
| Festivals | | Promote festivals and encourage development of additional supporting festivals and events | Support development of signature event(s) for the heritage area |
| Visitor research and statistics | Develop cooperative protocol with partners and begin collection of baseline information | Monitor visitor research data and tourism statistics to identify change over time | Continue |
Chapter 10 • Phased Implementation – Management & Implementation

Strategic Objectives for Management and Implementation

- Organize for leadership
- Cultivate partnerships
- Seek visibility
- Develop resources and raise funds
- Evaluate and celebrate progress

CONCEPT: Managing the National Heritage Area is a large management challenge, but management concerns are a simple few: achieve excellence in leadership (a management goal), enable partners to develop their capacity to implement the aspects of the management plan as they choose, cultivate partnerships among the wide variety of actors able to help with implementation, both inside and beyond the San Luis Valley, plan communicates and public outreach carefully and effectively, and raise the necessary funds to pay for it all. Note that actions for the Board of Directors as compiled in the management plan are not included here; all are important and are to be considered by the Board as it grows its own capacity to lead the National Heritage Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity – Chapter 10</th>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Two</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
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</table>
| Partnership Development Program | • Establish a partnership assistance program that recognizes the many ways that the National Heritage Area can support the growth and development of partners’ capacity and programs  
• Reserve a portion of annual federal heritage area funding for small monetary grants that will build partners’ capacity  
• Develop and implement a process and annual schedule for the identification and selection of partner projects to receive support in the form of grants or other heritage area benefits that should be documented as part of the heritage area’s record to be evaluated in relation to Congressional requirements |                                                                          |                                                                            |
| Recognition program   |                                                                          |                                                                          | Create an awards program to recognize partner achievements |
| Cultivate partnerships | • Hold regular gatherings of partners to review progress on the management plan, at least twice yearly to fulfill requirements of the National Heritage Area legislation (also a communications activity)  
• Regularly brief local, state, tribal, and federal officials whose responsibilities can include support for the National | Continue | Continue |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity – Chapter 10</th>
<th>Year One</th>
<th>Year Two</th>
<th>Year Three</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultivate partnerships, cont’d</td>
<td>Heritage Area (Note: specific groups to target are mentioned in relevant sections of this guidance document)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Public outreach & communications | • Create a communications plan within the annual work plan, coordinating with communications associated with interpretation, heritage tourism marketing, and resource development  
• Carry out the communications plan | Update and carry out the communications plan, evaluating recent experience  
Public an annual report | Continue |
| Resource development & fundraising | • Develop a long-range resource development plan  
• Develop a short-range or strategic plan within the annual work plan, coordinated with the communications plan and setting measurable objectives tied to financial planning  
• Develop a “case statement” that makes the arguments in general that are likely to appeal to donors, to provide a basis for appeals tailored to prospects  
• Develop a donor database and begin gathering information about prospects, using a software system designed to support long term growth of the database for the purpose of raising both cash and in-kind donations | Evaluate recent experience and update the long-range plan, maintaining a longer time horizon than the annual work plan | Continue |
## APPENDIX I: LISTING OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Strategic Objective/Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-12</td>
<td><strong>Strategic Objectives for Historic Preservation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Connect with federal and state initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Continue to inventory and study historic resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide regional leadership in developing public appreciation, advocacy, technical information, and training to encourage local action</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide technical assistance and financial support</td>
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### Connect with Federal and State Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-13</td>
<td>Stay informed about federal initiatives being undertaken in and around the San Luis Valley relating to the heritage area’s mission and goals. Provide information to local communities and residents and facilitate communication where appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-14</td>
<td>Work with federal agencies to relate separate initiatives associated with heritage area interests and to make them available and relevant to local communities and residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-14</td>
<td>Actively seek ways for federal agencies to undertake projects and provide technical assistance and support for heritage area and community goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-15</td>
<td>Actively participate in the American Latino Heritage Initiative. Construct appropriate heritage area projects to be consistent with its goals and to align with its criteria for support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-15</td>
<td>Coordinate with, support, and assist the National Park Service in realizing recommendations included in its San Luis Valley and Central Sangre de Cristo Mountains Reconnaissance Survey Report (Working Draft).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-16</td>
<td>Collaborate with the Old Spanish Trail Association, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management in the study, interpretation, and preservation of the Northern Branch of the Old Spanish Trail in the San Luis Valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-16</td>
<td>Encourage completion and implementation of the comprehensive management plan for the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-16</td>
<td>Maintain an ongoing dialogue and collaborate with the Rio Grande National Heritage Area on projects and initiatives of mutual interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Inventory and Study Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-16</td>
<td>Establish a group of qualified research advisors to provide guidance to heritage area research activities and initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-16</td>
<td>Establish a research network open to individuals interested in the National Heritage Area’s history through which research information and initiatives can be shared and coordinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-17</td>
<td>Assemble a bibliography of research studies, publications, and information that can be accessed through the heritage area’s website with links to digitally available studies and information on where other studies can be found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-17</td>
<td>Working with research advisors, establish a research program for the National Heritage Area, identifying research topics, gaps in existing knowledge, research questions, and guidance for research studies that would most benefit the heritage area and its communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-17</td>
<td>Seek programmatic and funding support for research initiatives on the National Heritage Area’s history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Objective/Action</td>
<td>Chapter 4 • Historic Preservation</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-17 Encourage, facilitate, coordinate, and support research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>initiatives being undertaken by researchers on the National</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Area’s history. Consult with federal and state</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>agencies on research being undertaken or that could be</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>undertaken on the federal and state levels. Consult with local</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>researchers on initiatives they would be interested in</td>
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<tr>
<td>undertaking. Provide guidance and support for research in</td>
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<tr>
<td>accordance with priorities established in the heritage area’s</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>research program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-18 Organize the creation of a comprehensive heritage area-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wide historic resource inventory using the San Luis Valley</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS database and co-ordinate with OAHP’s statewide historic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>resource database.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-18 Develop ongoing community program of preparing cultural</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>landscape reports, context studies, historic district</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>assessments, and nominations to the National and State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Registers for historic resources within the heritage area.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Provide Regional Preservation Leadership</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4-18 Serve as a regional connection to state and national</td>
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<tr>
<td>preservation organizations on behalf of local communities and</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizations within the National Heritage Area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-19 Encourage and assist local communities and organizations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>in identifying and organizing programmatic assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>available at the state and national levels.</td>
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<td>4-19 Develop working relationships with community leaders</td>
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<td>regarding planning and review processes that impact historic</td>
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<td>resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-19 Work with local heritage area partners who are able to</td>
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<tr>
<td>attend community planning meetings and participate in the</td>
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<td>planning process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-19 Maintain an ongoing awareness of historic preservation-</td>
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<tr>
<td>related projects and issues that are coming before</td>
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<tr>
<td>community leaders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-19 Seek funding and programmatic assistance from nonprofit,</td>
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<tr>
<td>statewide, and national organizations to provide planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>resources, training, and assistance to local communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>directly or through the National Heritage Area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-19 Create a program to assist communities in developing</td>
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<td>planning tools that will provide guidance for good decision-</td>
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<tr>
<td>making with respect to historic preservation and community</td>
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<tr>
<td>character.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-19 Provide technical assistance to communities for planning</td>
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<td>initiatives and particular projects where appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-19 Coordinate preservation programming with OAHP’s State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preservation Plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-21 Encourage communities to consider and adopt planning</td>
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<td>processes and techniques that strengthen communities and</td>
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<td>enhance community character.</td>
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<td>4-21 Encourage and assist counties and local communities with</td>
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<tr>
<td>preparation and implementation of preservation and cultural</td>
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<td>resource plans.</td>
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<td>4-21 Explore national models of incentive-based programs that</td>
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<tr>
<td>promote and facilitate historic preservation and strengthening</td>
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<td>of community character.</td>
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<td>4-21 Encourage and support a network of preservation advocates</td>
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<td>within local communities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-21 Heritage area board and staff will be active as</td>
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<td>preservation advocates under policies and positions determined</td>
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<td>by the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s Board of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>**Provide Technical Assistance and Financial Support for</td>
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<tr>
<td>Projects**</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-22 Work with partners to actively encourage, facilitate,</td>
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<tr>
<td>and support bricks-and-mortar preservation and rehabilitation</td>
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<td>projects that revitalize communities and are consistent with</td>
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<tr>
<td>preservation standards and guidelines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-22 Help coordinate, seek funding for, and organize technical</td>
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<tr>
<td>assistance for the planning and implementation of preservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>and rehabilitation projects by partners and the private sector.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-22 Consider creating a grant program for emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td>stabilization of threatened buildings, a small-scale matching</td>
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<tr>
<td>grant program for façade and other building improvements, and</td>
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<tr>
<td>over the longer term a revolving loan program to</td>
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<tr>
<td>promote building rehabilitation.</td>
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<td>Strategic Objective/Action</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chapter 4 • Historic Preservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-22</td>
<td>Organize workshops and training programs for local contractors and craftsmen to train them in preservation concepts, construction, and materials conservation techniques.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Strategic Objective/Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 5 • Conservation &amp; Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2</td>
<td><strong>Strategic Objectives for Conservation &amp; Recreation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Forge close ties and partnerships with federal, state, and regional land stewardship entities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Build public awareness through interpretation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Build visibility of existing opportunities and encourage public access</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encourage public access through recreation-related business development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Support planning and development of local and regional recreational trail networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support watershed restoration efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitor Solar Energy Zones Development Initiatives</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Connect with Federal and State Initiatives**

| 5-6  | Collaborate closely with conservation and land stewardship organizations throughout the National Heritage Area. Be informed and involved with their conservation and stewardship initiatives and partner with them to provide support where possible. |
| 5-6  | Work with conservation and land stewardship partners to promote public awareness of stewardship and conservation through interpretive and educational programs outlined in Chapters 6 and 7. |
| 5-6  | Coordinate with federal and state agencies managing public lands and the Adams State College outdoor recreation program on recreational opportunities and programming within the heritage area. Serve as a supporting resource on developing opportunities, enhancing facilities, and implementing best practices. |
| 5-6  | Coordinate the heritage area’s programs with the U.S. Department of the Interior’s America’s Great Outdoors initiatives as they emerge in the San Luis Valley and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The “San Luis Valley Great Outdoors” initiative is the Valley’s local interpretation of the President’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative. |

**Build Public Awareness through Interpretation**

| 5-9  | As outlined in Chapter 7, undertake a comprehensive program for enhanced interpretation of the National Heritage Area’s natural landscape in partnership with state and federal agencies featuring publicly owned lands. (This is expected to include the development of a multi-media approach involving landscape guides and exhibits, site interpretation, driving tours and themed itineraries, and digital content.) |
| 5-9  | Work with conservation and land stewardship organizations in helping them realize the significance of historic and cultural features associated with the properties they are preserving. Assist with and help facilitate appropriate treatments and/or presentations of historic and cultural resources on conserved properties. |

**Build Visibility of Existing Opportunities and Encourage Public Access**

<p>| 5-11 | Work with federal and state public agencies, local governments, and other nonprofits to help establish improved information about access to public lands to inform visitors of available recreational resources and programs throughout the heritage area. |
| 5-12 | Assess the feasibility of establishing a well-appointed orientation center focusing on public lands, natural resources and the cultural landscape, environmental education, and recreational opportunities in the San Luis Valley. |
| 5-12 | Work with partners to develop and maintain a comprehensive map and listing of publicly accessible lands and recreational sites and amenities. Ensure that this information is available in print form and electronically via the heritage area’s website. |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 5 • Conservation &amp; Recreation</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Develop a corps of local guides who can lead visitors on backcountry hikes and other outings of varying lengths and degrees of difficulty. Consider permitting requirements each agency may have different requirements depending compensation for guide services, participation fees, risk and duty of care, public advertising, and other special resource considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Work with partners to develop a local guide training program, with particular focus on recruiting young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>Promote existing recreational opportunities and events, including a listing of guides, local outfitters, campgrounds, and other small recreation-related businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage Public Access through Recreation-related Business Development</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-13</td>
<td>Encourage partners to offer small-business development training, workshops, and/or conferences to local residents interested in eco-tourism and recreation-related entrepreneurship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-13</td>
<td>Promote recreational and eco-tourism opportunities through heritage area marketing materials and promotional literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-13</td>
<td>Seek collaborative opportunities with eco-tourism initiatives offered by organizations, clubs, and private providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Planning and Development of Local and Regional Recreational Trail Networks</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>Support development of local recreational trail initiatives, including a more extensive trail and interpretive network on the Alamosa Ranch and the implementation of the Costilla County trails plan currently under development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>Work with county and local governments to encourage communities to undertake trail plans, particularly where they can promote heritage tourism and environmental education goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>Support the regional efforts of the SLVGO as they work to update the “Great San Luis Valley Trails and Recreation Master Plan” of 1996 to expand public access along the river for trails, fishing, and boat access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>Support efforts to create a corridor of conservation easements on private lands along the Rio Grande, as may be possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>Promote existing and planned trail projects through heritage area media outlets. Work with partners to advertise special trail events and educational programs, as well as trail planning studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support Watershed Restoration Efforts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>Work with federal and state public agencies, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to promote the goals and objectives of the Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>Work with partners to promote education programs and demonstration projects that are designed to teach local residents and visitors about the critical role that water plays in sustaining the culture and economy of the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>Ensure that interpretive projects convey the importance and intricacy of the Rio Grande Basin’s hydrologic system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>Promote the vision of the Rio Grande corridor as a regional recreational resource.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>Work with partner agencies and organizations, as well as tourism-related businesses, to promote and enhance awareness of existing water-oriented recreation opportunities (fishing, boating, swimming, birding, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>In accordance with recommendations found in 5.7, above, work with partners to help develop small eco-tourism business development opportunities that focus on water and river-oriented recreation.</td>
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### Chapter 5 • Conservation & Recreation

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<th>Strategic Objective/Action</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monitor Solar Energy Zone Development Initiatives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-20 Monitor the status of energy development, to include future transmission lines and substations, and their potential impacts on the National Heritage Area’s cultural landscape. Be prepared to comment knowledgeably about development, impacts, and mitigation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 6 • Conserving Community & Traditions

**6-2 Strategic Objectives for Conserving Community & Traditions**

- Promote heritage pride and community memory
- Engage communities through arts, folk music and dance, cultural programs and events, and enrolling volunteers
- Engage educational institutions
- Undertake programs for youth education and leadership development
- Engage agriculture’s cultural ties and possibilities

**Promote Heritage Pride and Community Memory**

- Support existing oral history programs and other partner programs in documenting the history and the stories of the Valley’s many cultures.
- Investigate existing oral history projects and training programs designed to explore personal heritage. Use successful programs and techniques as the basis for establishing standards and procedures for collecting individual “Community Memory” contributions.
- Create and train a “Community Memory Corps of Volunteers” responsible for accessioning, cataloging, and conserving individual contributions (to include digital collections and web-based media).
- Encourage and support the development of at least one central repository for documents, objects, and oral histories.
- Work with the new Heritage Center in San Luis or other repository to design an interpretive program for presenting these collections to the public (to include web-based media that can be featured at other heritage area museums).

**Engage Communities**

- Coordinate the publicizing of cultural events and programs in the many media vehicles managed by heritage area partners, including the heritage area’s website, newsletters, and press releases. Explore and employ ways to reach residents who do not have access to a computer, especially through churches, where multiple generations can be reached through church newsletters, announcements, events, etc.
- Work with heritage area and cultural program providers on effective, collaborative research into the needs and interests of local audiences.
- Involve the arts and cultural programming community in bringing engaging and relevant interpretation to visitor audiences.
- Partner with local trades organizations or artists’ guilds in creating training or promote existing apprentice programs in preservation and conservation trades and skills.
- Work with partners to develop a list of their volunteer needs and assist in creating volunteer position descriptions.
- Establish methods by which volunteer positions can be tracked and effectively advertised to residents (such as sponsoring information sessions or open houses and posting to the heritage area’s website).
- Create a program to recognize volunteers and their contributions to the National Heritage Area and its partners.
### Strategic Objective/Action

#### Chapter 6 • Conserving Community & Traditions

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<th>Strategic Objective/Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Encourage museums and cultural centers to promote published books, journals, and articles that are written by local authors. Feature a link to these resources on the heritage area website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td><strong>Engage Higher Education Programs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Work with Adams State University and Trinidad State Junior College to recruit student applicants for partners’ intern and apprentice programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Collaborate with Adams State University and Trinidad State Junior College in developing a comprehensive program of research into and preservation of cultural traditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>Partner with Adams State University and other institutions of higher learning to offer training in accessioning, cataloging, and conservation standards to staff and volunteers of museums and other cultural sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td><strong>Youth Education and Leadership Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Establish an advisory committee or working group of educators, including teachers, superintendents, and other partners (site and park-based educators), to identify ways in which the seven local school districts can plan and develop programs that use local resources as a basis for education to meet state standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Widely promote curricula and lesson plans that have already been developed, such as “Ties that Bind.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Work with partners on creating interactive and engaging opportunities for children, teenagers, and young adults that use local resources (historic sites, environmental resources, community programs, etc.) to meet curriculum requirements; widely promote these opportunities through heritage area publications, website links, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Identify specific needs for teacher and administrator training (workshops, webinars, continuing education classes, etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Work to enable educators to utilize heritage area sites effectively for student education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Encourage sites to work collaboratively to meet teachers’ and students’ needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Develop an educational section of the heritage area website that promotes developed heritage area curriculum materials, lesson plans, games, and/or activities for use by students, teachers, and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Help establish a scholastic honors program or special prizes to encourage high school students to undertake special projects in research, interpretation, conservation, the arts, local government, and other subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-14</td>
<td>Create a recognition program to celebrate educational programming and teachers who incorporate local culture and resources into their courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-17</td>
<td>Recruit partners and establish an advisory committee of youth leadership development organizations to develop a Junior Ambassador program. Identify roles and responsibilities among partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-17</td>
<td>Implement the program beginning with demonstration/phased efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-17</td>
<td>Work with partners, teachers, and school administrators to promote the program through school newsletters, churches, partner and heritage area publications, and website links.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20</td>
<td><strong>Local Foods and Agriculture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20</td>
<td>Establish a sustainable agriculture advisory committee consisting of representatives from the San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition, the Rio Culebra Cooperative, local farmers, school teachers and administrative officials, state officials, and other local, state, and national food advocacy organizations to identify opportunities for integrating sustainable agriculture education into the school curriculum, both formally and informally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20</td>
<td>Work with partners to encourage the development of a Farm to School Pilot Program within the National Heritage Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20</td>
<td>Support partner initiatives to establish sustainable agriculture demonstration gardens, community gardens, schoolyard gardens, community kitchens, and educational programs. Promote these sites and programs through heritage area publications, website links, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-20</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 6 • Conserving Community &amp; Traditions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with partners to help develop structured sustainable agriculture internship and apprenticeship programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20</td>
<td>Develop standards for a heritage area recognition program for sustainable agricultural producers, retailers, and restaurants that serve foods produced within the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-20</td>
<td>Together with partners, develop a well-coordinated marketing program to promote the range and availability of foods produced within the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 7 • Heritage Area Interpretation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-2</td>
<td><strong>Strategic Objectives for Interpretation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Create a coordinated heritage area-wide interpretive presentation of landscapes and sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enable participating communities to tell their own stories in individual ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Support interpretive partners’ development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enable experiences of the natural landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Create a heritage area-wide interpretive presence that establishes the interpretive context for residents and visitors. Incorporate appropriate elements over time as opportunities, resources, and partnerships suggest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Use the heritage area website as a medium for interpretation. Build the website’s interpretive content over time covering key themes and stories in increasing detail and coordinating with participating communities and sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>Create a coordinated family of publications interpreting the National Heritage Area and partnering communities and sites. Build the family of publications over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>Publish a guide to the San Luis Valley landscape describing the unique landscape areas within the National Heritage Area, including landforms, geology, plant communities, and wildlife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-14</td>
<td>Develop a family of signage types and graphic formats to be used heritage area-wide, including entrance signs, wayfinding signs, kiosks, waysides, identification signs, and others as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-15</td>
<td>Install outdoor orientation kiosks in the four Cornerstone Communities to welcome visitors, provide information, introduce the heritage area’s primary themes, and orient visitors to driving tours, sites, and communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-16</td>
<td>Collaborate with Los Caminos Antiguos to complete implementation of the byway’s interpretive plan and to add additional interpretation presenting the valley’s natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-16</td>
<td>Designate additional driving routes as branches to Los Caminos Antiguos to provide linkages to communities and sites not directly on the byway and to complete a circular connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-16</td>
<td>Develop themed itineraries and driving tours for special subjects and audiences with special interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Community Presentations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-18</td>
<td>Implement a system of community interpretation as a central component of the National Heritage Area interpretive presentation. Each community is encouraged and supported in development of its interpretive presentation and visitor experience in accordance with its interests and capabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-19</td>
<td>Communities wishing to participate in the National Heritage Area’s interpretive program should prepare interpretive plans in accordance with heritage area guidelines and with heritage area assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-19</td>
<td>Install introductory exhibits in each participating community relating the community to heritage area-wide interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-20</td>
<td>Local interpretive sites and attractions within and close to communities should participate in the development of community interpretive plans and in their implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 7 • Heritage Area Interpretation</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-20</td>
<td>Each community participating in the National Heritage Area’s interpretive presentation should create a network of outdoor interpretive exhibits presenting the community’s history and significance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-20</td>
<td>Use historic buildings and landscape features within the community to tell the community’s stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-20</td>
<td>Use artwork as a key component of community interpretation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-21</td>
<td>Include interpretive publications as a component of community interpretive presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-21</td>
<td>Use walking tours as a component of community interpretive presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-21</td>
<td>Develop a heritage area-wide network of living history and cultural presentations that may be offered in communities and sites during festivals and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-21</td>
<td>Include festivals and events as a component of community interpretive presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-21</td>
<td>Feature local arts and crafts in the interpretive presentation of heritage area communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support for Interpretive Sites</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-22</td>
<td>Incorporate the National Heritage Area’s interpretive sites and attractions into community interpretive plans and heritage area-wide interpretive presentations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-22</td>
<td>Encourage interpretive sites to work collaboratively for mutual support and assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-22</td>
<td>Existing interpretive sites should prepare brief self-assessments that describe existing conditions and programming and outline how the site wishes to participate in the National Heritage Area program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-22</td>
<td>Execute a cooperative agreement in which the site affirms its interest in working in collaboration with other National Heritage Area partners in a heritage area-wide interpretive presentation and will abide by heritage area principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-23</td>
<td>Install introductory exhibits at participating sites introducing the National Heritage Area, setting the context for site interpretation relative to heritage area themes, and drawing connections to other interpretive sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-23</td>
<td>Provide support to sites in planning and implementing interpretive enhancements that support the heritage area experience in accordance with the availability of resources and heritage area priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-23</td>
<td>Partnering sites within the National Heritage Area will work together to plan and implement cooperative programming and interpretive initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-23</td>
<td>Organize workshops for participating sites to facilitate communication and offer educational and technical training.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7-23</td>
<td>Provide technical assistance to participating sites in accordance with interests, needs, and the availability of resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-24</td>
<td>Support sites as they plan and seek funding for implementation of site improvements that support interpretation and visitor experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-24</td>
<td>Facilitate coordination between interpretive sites and communities in programming such as festivals and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiencing our Natural Landscapes</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-24</td>
<td>Undertake a comprehensive program for enhanced interpretation of the National Heritage Area’s natural landscape in partnership with state and federal agencies featuring publicly owned lands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-24</td>
<td>Coordinate interpretation of the heritage area landscape in close cooperation with the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-25</td>
<td>Introduce interpretation of the natural landscape through heritage area-wide interpretation to set the context for the interpretation of cultural themes and stories as outlined in the section above on heritage area-wide interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-25</td>
<td>Feature detailed interpretation of the natural landscape and the National Heritage Area’s unique ecosystems at natural resource sites such as the national park, wildlife areas, and wildlife refuges.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-25</td>
<td>Create driving tours and subject-specific itineraries in the valley and adjacent mountains tailored to the interests of nature and recreational enthusiasts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-25</td>
<td>Create an enhanced recreational and interpretive experience using the many trail systems on publicly owned lands especially in the mountains east and west of the valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-25</td>
<td>Develop interpretive materials to encourage and support the recreational use of public trails including detailed maps, trailhead exhibits, and trail guides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-26</td>
<td>Use the National Heritage Area website and social media to provide information on recreational opportunities within the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-26</td>
<td>Collaborate with private sector in providing high quality back country experiences for visitors and groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 8 • Heritage Tourism & Marketing

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-5</td>
<td><strong>Strategic Objectives for Heritage Tourism &amp; Marketing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop a single, heritage area-wide graphic identity and messaging campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Leverage connections to the National Park Service and Great Sand Dunes National Park</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage a welcoming culture of hospitality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Fully inform visitors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reach out to those who can help spread the word (public relations and targeted marketing)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Support festivals and events</td>
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<tr>
<td>8-6</td>
<td>Collaborate with tourism partners on visitor research to create a better understanding of existing and potential visitors to the heritage area and to track trends and changes over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-8</td>
<td><strong>Heritage Area-wide Graphic Identity and Messaging Campaign</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a single graphic identity and messaging plan for the National Heritage Area.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop a Graphic Identity and Messaging Strategy Style Guide to ensure consistent and correct use of the graphic identity and messaging strategy across the National Heritage Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor the use of the graphic identity and messaging to ensure compliance with the Style Guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-9</td>
<td><strong>Leverage Connections to the National Park Service and Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area passport stamp. Encourage active participation in the National Park Service’s Passport program at multiple sites within the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop a Sangre de Cristo Junior Ranger workbook. Offer ongoing opportunities for youth to participate in a Junior Ranger Program for the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Develop and disseminate a Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Visitor Guide for the heritage area on an annual basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11</td>
<td><strong>Encourage a Welcoming Culture of Hospitality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a heritage area-wide hospitality training program for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to offer heritage-area hospitality training and refresher courses on an ongoing basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12</td>
<td><strong>Fully Inform Visitors</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Designate heritage area welcome centers.</td>
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</table>
## Chapter 8 • Heritage Tourism & Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Objective/Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-12 Install entrance signs at major gateways to the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 Install wayfinding signage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12 Work to ensure that attractions and visitor services in the heritage area are registered as listed destinations on GPS navigation systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-13 Produce a tear-off map for the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-14 Create brochure design templates for communities, individual attractions, itineraries, and topics of interest related to the heritage area’s interpretive themes that reflect the graphic identity and messaging strategy for the heritage area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-14 Collaborate with communities and individual attractions to develop brochures using the established heritage area brochure design templates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-14 Implement distribution and dissemination strategies for the heritage area’s print publications in key locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-15 Enhance and maintain a user-friendly website for the heritage area that includes accurate and current information for visitors and heritage area partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-16 Include links to other related websites on the heritage area’s website, and encourage other appropriate websites to link to the heritage area’s website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-17 Create a social media presence for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. Monitor the return on investment with different kinds of social media and continue to monitor the latest trends in this field.</td>
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### Public Relations and Targeted Marketing

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-17 Develop a public awareness campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-17 Develop a Sangre de Cristo press kit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-18 Develop and implement a comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign, working initially on outreach to local residents and current visitors at heritage area attractions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-18 Refine and revise the comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign, expanding the marketing reach to include travelers passing through the region and targeted drive markets within the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-18 Create and market tour package for the heritage area.</td>
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</table>

### Festivals and Events

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<tr>
<th>Strategic Objective/Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8-19 Promote and support festivals and events in the heritage area, especially those with the potential to draw heritage travelers and provide a meaningful experience connected to the interpretive themes of the heritage area.</td>
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## Chapter 9 • Community Revitalization

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-5 <strong>Strategic Objectives for Community Revitalization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-5 Establish a community revitalization program for communities to develop individual plans and programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-5 Encourage communities to use community interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their community revitalization plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-5 Establish a quality assurance program to recognize the efforts of participating visitor service providers and interpretive sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-5 Create a San Luis Valley/Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brand for local products representative of local character and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-5 Encourage local entrepreneurs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Revitalization Program</strong></td>
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<td>9-9</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community Interpretation and Heritage Tourism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Establishing a Quality Assurance Program</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Create a Regional Brand for Local Products</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Encourage Local Entrepreneurs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic Objective/Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-2 Strategic Objectives for Management &amp; Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Organize for leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cultivate partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seek visibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Develop resources and raise funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Evaluate and celebrate progress</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organize for Leadership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-6 For meetings of the Board of Directors, organize a standing agenda around the topics of the management plan and resource development in order to maintain focus on achieving the heritage area’s mission, vision, and goals.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-6 Undertake annual board training focusing on important issues where education and discussion will benefit the development of a sound corporate culture.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-6 Reserve at least one round of committee and board meetings each year to evaluate progress on the management plan and the board’s involvement in communications and resource development, and to establish near-term strategies that guide staff proposals for annual work plans and the budget.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-7 Establish program committees charged with providing ongoing leadership and detailed review in implementing key programs and projects and addressing critical long-term topics of the management plan. Expect these committees to provide summary reporting in Board of Directors meetings regarding progress toward the goals of the management plan.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-7 Ask partner representatives to serve on program committees and other kinds of working groups as needed.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-9 Organize standing committees around critical organizational functions; be flexible as to committee assignments, membership, and responsibilities. In establishing each committee, provide a specific, written job description.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-9 Arrange Board of Directors meeting schedules to support directors’ spending time to support committees as well as to attend Board meetings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-10 Undertake an evaluation of current representation on the board of directors and develop plans for expanding diversity and skill sets to support management plan implementation and resource development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-10 Develop job descriptions for directors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-10 Develop a code of ethics or conflict of interest statement.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-10 Set basic standards of excellence and let partners, funders, and the public know such standards are part of the Board of Directors’ expectations for doing business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-10 Include nonprofit management topics in training workshops for the Board of Directors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-12 Establish a three-year plan for the addition of staffing resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-12 Establish regular personnel and hiring/contracting procedures, including plans for staff training.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-13 Establish a computerized financial management system that generates sufficient financial data for planning, resource development (fundraising) and administration, and reports to funders and the public.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-13 Establish regular financial procedures to support the Board of Directors’ fiduciary responsibilities, including an annual budget and regular reviews of progress in meeting the budget.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-14 Establish an operations manual documenting all Board of Directors policies and procedures and compiling key organizational records.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-16 Establish an annual work plan in accord with an annual budget and tied to the annual task agreement required under NPS procedures for annual NHA grants.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-16 Undertake periodic strategic planning to support annual work planning.</td>
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<td>Strategic Objective/Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-17</td>
<td>Cultivate Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-17</td>
<td>Facilitate ongoing collaboration among partners to promote plans for resource protection, restoration, construction, interpretation, community revitalization, and other partner programs that support the long-range goals of this management plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-18</td>
<td>Request interpretive services from the National Park Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-18</td>
<td>Seek “details” of personnel from the National Park Service to assist with short-term projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Maintain a memorandum of understanding or cooperative agreement with the NPS for assistance with Board of Directors operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Maintain NPS liaison role (as provided during management planning).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Address the need for greater interpretation of the valley’s natural resources, encouraging collaboration among not only federal land-managing agencies and the Board of Directors but also with a variety of organizations, including state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Build relationships with agencies at the federal level whose work affects the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area or which can provide services and funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Provide routine briefings to members of the Colorado Congressional delegation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Engage in diplomatic relations with tribal nations and consult on projects of mutual benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Provide routine briefings to the Governor and seek help with coordination of state agencies’ contributions to implementation of the management plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Provide routine briefings to elected officials representing heritage area jurisdictions in the state legislature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>Build relationships with agencies at the state level whose work affects the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area or which can provide services and funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Provide routine briefings to local government officials and involve them in the National Heritage Area’s community designation program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Build relationships with various groups related to public schools (districts, superintendents, teachers, parent-teacher groups, students and student groups, and other service organizations involved in the schools).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Build relationships with institutions of higher learning in or serving the National Heritage Area that can provide services and funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-21</td>
<td>Establish a partnership assistance program that recognizes the many ways that the National Heritage Area can support the growth and development of partners’ capacity and programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-21</td>
<td>Reserve a portion of annual federal heritage area funding for small monetary grants that will build partners’ capacity. Develop and implement a process and annual schedule for the identification and selection of partner projects to receive support in the form of grants or other heritage area benefits that should be documented as part of the heritage area’s record to be evaluated in relation to Congressional requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-22</td>
<td>Create a communications plan within the annual work plan, coordinating with communications associated with interpretation, heritage tourism marketing, and resource development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-23</td>
<td>Hold regular gatherings of partners to review progress on the management plan, at least twice yearly to fulfill requirements of the National Heritage Area legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-23</td>
<td>Create an awards program to recognize partner achievements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Strategic Objective/Action</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 10 • Management &amp; Implementation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Develop Resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-28</td>
<td>Develop a resource development plan and an accompanying short-range plan that can be coordinated with the annual work plan. Make each plan as specific as possible, with financial targets by category of source (see Table 10-2 for categories) and other measurable objectives; update each on a regular basis to maintain a time horizon beyond the annual work plan of at least three years. (The following actions are logical and expected elements of resource development planning and action.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-28</td>
<td>Coordinate all resource development activities with the annual work plan, especially the communications plan, in order to integrate resource development into all aspects of programs and operations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-28</td>
<td>[Repeated] Undertake an evaluation of current representation on the board of directors and develop plans for expanding diversity and skill sets to support management plan implementation and resource development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-28</td>
<td>Develop a &quot;case statement&quot; that makes the arguments in general that are likely to appeal to donors. This brief document provides a basis for a message and an appeal that are to be crafted especially for each prospect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>Continuously research prospects and match them with directors, staff, and friends; vice versa, identify prospects through existing relationships assessed by directors, staff, and friends for potential support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>Continue to build and nurture relationships with local, state, and federal officials and their staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>Build and nurture relationships with local and state corporations whose interests intersect with those of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>Build and nurture relationships with local and state foundations whose interests intersect with those of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its programs. Consider informal or formal working groups with non-board advisors for long-term cooperation on building such relationships, as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>Make resource development a regular part of the agenda of the Board of Directors’ board of directors, with a generous amount of time devoted to this topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>Develop a donor database and begin gathering information about prospects, using a software system designed to support long term growth of the database for the purpose of fundraising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-29</td>
<td>Include volunteers in the donor database. Thank contributors of in-kind services and donated materials in the National Heritage Area as diligently as those who donate cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Evaluate and Celebrate Progress</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-31</td>
<td>Establish measurable objectives at the time each program is designed and inaugurated, for annual documentation and review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-31</td>
<td>Maintain excellent record-keeping to support annual and long-term evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-31</td>
<td>Conduct annual or periodic evaluations of the work of the Board of Directors and the efforts of partners in achieving the vision for the National Heritage Area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-31</td>
<td>[Repeated] Reserve at least one round of committee and board meetings each year to evaluate progress on the management plan and the Board’s involvement, with particular focus on communications and resource development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX J: The Potential for Sustained Local Funding

Introduction

One of the options examined for the development of long-range support by local governments in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is the idea of a modest new tax to support National Heritage Area projects, such as a sales tax or a property tax. (Table 10-2 in Chapter 10 of the management plan lists all options studied during the management planning process.) Possibilities among the counties vary, and it is likely each county would arrive at a different choice. Any of the options outlined below would likely take some years to bring to fruition. It should be noted that all of the taxing options outlined below would require city and county approval and a vote of those anticipated to pay into the new additional tax. While considering any of the options outlined below, the following factors must be kept in mind when deciding which – if any – of the suggested approaches below are realistic to achieve the goals of the National Heritage Area:

- The overall difficult economic realities and conservative fiscal orientation in the San Luis Valley;
- Existing revenue burdens, such as lodging and/or marketing taxes;
- Disparities between the revenue streams and collection potential among the counties;
- The ability of any multi-county mechanism to be adoptable/implementable in the San Luis Valley counties not currently in the National Heritage Area boundary (since typically the six counties work together on multi-county initiatives such as a collaborative local 911 fee);
- Colorado law requires a vote to implement any tax increase; and
- Extensive education, communication, and campaign strategies would need to be employed to promote and successfully pass any kind of tax increase; given limited staff and board capacity and many other operational demands, opportunity costs could be high.

Additionally, any decision regarding the most appropriate source(s) of funding should be based upon:

- Approximate annual funding goals
- Determining which funding mechanism is most appropriate to meet project goals of the National Heritage Area.

Financial forecasting employed during the management planning process, going on the assumption of high overmatch using pass-through matches by partners, suggests that it may not be necessary to pursue this option in order to match the federal National Heritage Area funds at the minimum level. This is the least ambitious course, since such a strategy does not make a great deal of cash available as part of the match to be used for operations and programs. Therefore, discussion of this option is provided in this appendix because a more ambitious determination to accelerate and increase the absolute value of National Heritage Area spending needed to implement this plan completely in just ten years would require such local public support. Table J.2 indicates potential revenues that could be raised through a sales tax increase; Table J.3, through a property tax increase.
Funding Contribution by County

If this option is pursued, an important principle is that county contributions to the National Heritage Area would need to be made in a fair and equitable way. The contribution amount should be determined by a formula based on elements such as:

- Population;
- Primary visitor attraction numbers;
- Visitor-generated revenues;
- Revenue generation from other counties’ residents;
- Absolute minimum amount; and
- Others as appropriate.

Table J.1 2007-2010 Sales Tax Revenues by County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>FY2007</th>
<th>FY2008</th>
<th>FY2009</th>
<th>FY2010</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamosa¹</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>$1,788,864</td>
<td>$1,812,402</td>
<td>$1,815,501</td>
<td>$1,961,421</td>
<td>$1,844,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conejos²</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costilla³</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>$99,727</td>
<td>$99,486</td>
<td>$107,154</td>
<td>$102,824</td>
<td>$102,298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: State of Colorado assessor’s office, 2011

Table J.2 Sales Tax Generation Potential - Estimates by County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>0.1%</th>
<th>0.3%</th>
<th>0.5%</th>
<th>1.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamosa⁴</td>
<td>$61,485</td>
<td>$184,455</td>
<td>$307,425</td>
<td>$614,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conejos⁵</td>
<td>$33,081</td>
<td>$99,243</td>
<td>$165,405</td>
<td>$330,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costilla</td>
<td>$10,230</td>
<td>$30,689</td>
<td>$51,149</td>
<td>$102,298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$104,796</td>
<td>$314,387</td>
<td>$523,979</td>
<td>$1,047,958</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) and Heritage Strategies, LLC for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, 2011

¹ Alamosa County has a sales tax sharing agreement; the county receives only 40% of sales tax collected. Number shown reflects only the County share. FY2010 number reflects a windfall of around $140,000.

² Conejos County currently has no county sales tax.

³ In Costilla County, sales tax is shared amongst the county and the towns of San Luis and Blanca. The amount shown is total collections, of which the County receives 75%.


⁵ This number has not been verified and may include collections that would not be attributed to the County should a sales tax be adopted. It may be best considered as an order-of-magnitude estimate. Because Conejos County has not yet been able to provide data, it was derived from U.S. Census Bureau data indicating total retail sales in Conejos County of $33,081,000 in 2007. The data can be accessed at: http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/08/08021.html
Use and Distribution of Funds among Counties

If this option is pursued, to insure that each contributing county would benefit from participation to a degree commensurate with its contribution, the Board of Directors would commit to spending a predetermined minimum percentage share of total project funds in each county. In addition, projects in any of the counties would be eligible to compete for the remaining funds. As an example, the amount to be spent on National Heritage Area projects in each county might be 30 percent in Alamosa, 15 percent in Conejos, and 15 percent in Costilla. An organizational entity that encompasses all funders and counties could be established to select projects to be funded, or the SdCNHA Board of Directors could be such an entity, depending on whether and how local legislation establishing the funds is allowed to relate to a nonprofit. The remaining 40 percent would be in a competitive pool. Decisions about the projects selected for this portion would be decided by the organizational entity that oversees funding distribution.6

Actual percentages guaranteed to each county should take into account a range of factors:

- The share contributed (and, as such, population, revenues, and other factors in that formula);
- Potential for visitor attraction (as distinguished from current attraction);
- Need; and
- Others as appropriate.

Criteria for the selection of projects to consider include:

- How does the project fit with the overall purposes and planning of the National Heritage Area?
- What is the demonstrated capacity of local partners to manage the project?
- Would this funding leverage additional funds?
- Does the project offer a unique or time-sensitive opportunity?

---

6 A model for that could be adapted this funding structure is the regional Scientific and Cultural Facilities District structure used in metropolitan Denver area. Many diverse governments contribute a fixed percentage (0.1%) of sales tax to the fund. The distribution of funds is determined in three tiers. A fixed percentage supports large, primary visitor attractions that bring visitors to the area. Another percentage is distributed by the SCFD board to medium-scale facilities based on criteria, and a third tier is distributed to local Boards who award the funds via competitive grants to qualified facilities in their respective county. [This answers a comment above. You could perhaps move the footnote, or make this a full-fledge paragraph.]
Recommended Organizational Structure

If a new funding mechanism is to be created, it is critical to develop an organizational structure that provides a unified vision for National Heritage Area funding, promotes a cooperative decision-making process and defines the roles and responsibilities for all the funding partners. One option is to establish a separate organization, perhaps named the National Heritage Area Authority, as a distinct entity separate from the Board of Directors with members that would include representation from counties involved and the National Heritage Area, with representatives of the latter perhaps included as advisory, non-voting members. Colorado law requires participants in an authority to be governmental entities. It is possible the National Heritage Area could participate via separate contract if appropriate and desirable. The authority can be expanded to include additional entities if appropriate – i.e., if the National Heritage Area grows to encompass other counties or additional significant funders.

An authority is perhaps the most appropriate organizational structure to oversee multi-county funding for several reasons, including these:

- An authority provides the legal and organizational structure that brings together a number of entities with the common goal of funding projects in the National Heritage Area.
- An authority has a small voting membership representing all funders, encouraging swift and equitable decision making.
- There is constitutional and statutory authority to create an authority (the constitutional section is Colo. Const. Art. XIV, Sec. 18(2)(a) and (b), and the statute is 29-1-203, C.R.S.). Whatever the authority undertakes would be 'lawfully authorized to each' of the contracting agencies.
- The authority provides the structure for a formal arrangement that specifies:
  - What this group intends to do;
  - How the joint project is going to be managed, such as who is represented and how their voting interests are calculated;
  - Who is paying for what; and
  - How the group breaks up and what happens to any assets when it does.
- An agreement forming the authority would provide the outline of how the authority would be run, thus the authority has structure and legitimacy.
- The authority has open meetings, open records, a budget process, an audit process, standards for investment of public funds, etc., as indicated in the statutes. The authority has procedures that the governmental participants are familiar with because they use many of the same procedures in their own operations.
- As a governmental entity, an authority can apply for grants. Private entities, even nonprofit ones, sometimes do not qualify for certain types of governmental assistance, generally associated with economic development.
- The authority is a separate legal entity, and therefore can have its own insurance. In the event the authority commits torts, unless unusual circumstances exist, the member governments would not be liable for those torts.
The board of the authority can concentrate their attention on the functions of the authority, which may make it easier for the member governments because authority issues would be handled in authority meetings, not in meetings of the governing bodies of the participating governments. An authority allows for specialization.

If the legal parameters of the Authority structure are too limiting, the same provisions could be outlined in a contract that forms the funding entity and includes both governmental and non-governmental entities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision of P.L. 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001</th>
<th>Location in Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Management Plan (formatted draft)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(d) MANAGEMENT PLAN.—</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The management plan shall—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A) incorporate an integrated and cooperative approach for the protection, enhancement, and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;</td>
<td>Summarized in Chapter 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| (B) take into consideration State and local plans;       | All of the following state and local plans are cited in the References section that follows the plan and precedes the plan’s appendices; additionally federal land management plans for local resources were consulted and are also cited here for completeness; other studies and references are additionally cited in the list of references:
Chapter 4 (preservation): Colorado’s statewide historic preservation plan (*The Power of Heritage and Place: A 2020 Action Plan to Advance Preservation in Colorado*), described p. 4-20; and comprehensive plans for Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla counties, described pp. 4-8 to 4-10;
Chapter 5 (conservation and recreation): Colorado’s Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and the statewide historic preservation plan as for Chapter 4; *Rio Grande Corridor Final Plan (RGCFP): Final Rio Grande Corridor Coordinated Resource Management Plan and Taos Resource Management Plan Amendments; Conceptual Management Plan: Baca National Wildlife Refuge;* Alamosa County and Costilla County comprehensive plans; and a variety of individual site/resource studies/management plans including: *Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan*; and *Costilla County Trails, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan* (see p. 5-14). Additionally, we followed concurrent planning for these three projects applying to federal lands in the heritage area: the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s San Luis Valley Conservation Area (SLVCA) Land Protection Plan and Environmental Assessment and comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for the refuge complex which includes Alamosa, Monte Vista, and Baca National Wildlife Refuges; and the Bureau of Land Management’s Draft Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement affecting three solar energy zones in the NHA (described pp. 5-18 to 5-20). |
Chapter 9 (community revitalization): Colorado’s "Bottom-Up” 2011 County Economic Development Summary, one each for Alamosa, Conejos, and Costilla counties; *San Luis Valley* |
Provision of P.L. 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001 | Location in Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Management Plan (formatted draft)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(C) include—</th>
<th>Targeted Industry Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>(i) an inventory of—</td>
<td>[FYI - Subsection (b)(2) establishes boundaries] Maps describing the resources of the National Heritage Area are located as follows: Figure 2-2: Geology of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (p. 2-3) Figure 2-3: Hydrology of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as part of the larger Rio Grande Basin (p. 2-7) Figure 2-6: Principal Land Cover within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (p. 2-10) Figure 2-7: Ecological Regions of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (p. 2-12) Figure 2-8: Element Occurrences within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (p. 2-14) Figure 2-9: Potential Conservation Areas within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (p. 2-15) Figure 4-1: National and State Register Listed Properties (p. 4-3) Figure 4-2: National and State Register Listed Properties within the City of Alamosa (p. 4-4) Figure 4-3: National and State Register Listed Properties within the town of Antonito (p. 4-5) Figure 4-4: National and State Register Listed Properties within the town of San Luis (p. 4-6) Figure 4-5: Centennial Farms (p. 4-7) Figure 5-1: Conservation Lands &amp; Recreational Amenities within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (p. 5-5) In addition, Appendix F (pdf -p. 83 describes properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places and major interpretive sites.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| (II) any other property in the core area that— | (aa) is related to the themes of the Heritage Area; and See Interpretive Presentation Map, p. 7-3; Chapter 5 also calls out specific natural resources and conserved lands that help interpret heritage area themes in the section entitled “Build Public Awareness through Interpretation” beginning on p. 5-7. |</p>
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<tr>
<td>(bb) should be preserved, restored, managed, or maintained because of the significance of the property;</td>
<td>Chapter 4, see maps providing locations of listed, determined eligible, and field eligible historic properties, as well as all centennial farms. In general, Chapter 9 sets forth a process for communities to identify historic preservation projects that will support preservation of community traditions, interpretation and/or education projects, and/or community revitalization. Maps done for the project will allow the management entity to provide technical assistance for locally led historic preservation activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) comprehensive policies, strategies and recommendations for conservation, funding, management, and development of the Heritage Area;</td>
<td>In general, see chapters 4-10, in their entirety. Conservation: Chapter 5, Conservation &amp; Recreation (and Chapter 4, Historic Preservation) Funding: Chapter 10, section entitled “Resource Development beginning on p. 10-23 Management: Chapter 10, sections entitled “Organizing for Leadership” beginning on p. 10-2 (addressing leadership development for the management entity) and “Cultivating Partnerships” beginning on p. 10-16 (addressing partnerships with local, state, and federal governmental agencies and local, state, and national nonprofits) Development: Chapter 8, “Heritage Tourism &amp; Marketing,” and Chapter 9, “Community Revitalization.” Development is also addressed in Chapter 7, “Heritage Area Interpretation” (esp. “Community Arts and Crafts” on p. 7-21; and community planning tied to the same planning addressed in Chapter 9, in “Community Presentations” beginning on p. 7-16) and Chapter 6, “Conserving Community &amp; Traditions” (esp. sections on community engagement and the arts beginning on p. 6-6 and “Local Foods and Agriculture” beginning on p. 6-17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) a description of actions that governments, private organizations, and individuals have agreed to take to protect the natural, historical and cultural resources of the Heritage Area;</td>
<td>Chapter 10, sidebar on p. 10-15 entitled “Specific Commitments for Implementation,” which includes both governments and private, nonprofit organizations; individuals are covered by “private organizations” in which they participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iv) a program of implementation for the management plan by the management entity that includes a description of—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of P.L. 111-11, Title VIII,Subtitle A, Sec. 8001</td>
<td>Location in Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Management Plan (formatted draft)</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>(I) actions to facilitate ongoing collaboration among partners to promote plans for resource protection, restoration, and construction; and</td>
<td>Chapter 9 addresses community partners’ participation in community revitalization efforts, encouraging plans that address the topics of Chapters 4-9 (see p. 9-7, “Creating Community Revitalization Plans”). Community partners are to be organized into community working groups as a means of facilitating collaboration. Chapter 10 in the section on “Cultivating Partnerships” beginning on p. 10-16 describes partnerships and the ways that the management entity anticipates working with and encouraging collaboration among community working groups; federal, tribal, state, and local government partners; and educational institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(II) specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the management entity or any government, organization, or individual for the first 5 years of operation;</td>
<td>Chapter 10, sidebar on p. 10-15 entitled “Specific Commitments for Implementation,” which includes the management entity and both governments and private, nonprofit organizations; individuals are covered by “private organizations” in which they participate. (Note: this legislative requirement essentially repeats Sec. 8001(d)(2)(C)(iii) with the addition of the management entity; none of the entities making commitments shown here are willing to commit to a full five years at the specific level enumerated here for the first year. However, many organizations in the San Luis Valley and these three counties in particular are pursuing missions that will enable the implementation of this plan, which has taken account of others’ plans as required in Sec. 8001(d)(2)(B).)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(v) the identification of sources of funding for carrying out the management plan;</td>
<td>See Chapter 10, Table 10-2, “Potential Project Funding Options,” beginning on p. 10-26. Longer range options for raising local funds through government action are discussed in Appendix J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vi) analysis and recommendations for means by which local, State, and Federal programs, including the role of the National Park Service in the Heritage Area, may best be coordinated to carry out this section; and</td>
<td>Chapter 10, section entitled “Cultivating Partnerships,” beginning on p. 10-16, describes the ways that the management entity anticipates working with and coordinating the programs of community working groups; federal, tribal, state, and local government partners; and educational institutions. Specifically within this primary section are subsections entitled “The Federal Role in the National Heritage Area” beginning on p. 10-17 and “The Role of the State of Colorado” on p. 10-19 that fulfill this requirement. Extensive detail about the role of federal and state agencies within the heritage area vis a vis public lands is provided in Chapter 5, Conservation &amp; Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vii) an interpretive plan for the Heritage Area; and</td>
<td>Chapter 7 is an interpretive plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D) recommend policies and strategies for resource</td>
<td>(1) <em>Land and water management techniques:</em> as noted elsewhere in the legislation (Sec. 8001(f) in general; Sec. 8001(f)(4) re water in particular), the National Heritage Area does not have the power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
management that consider and detail the application of appropriate land and water management techniques, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area.

to affect the management of land and water in the lower San Luis Valley by governmental agencies or private owners, nor is it allowed to acquire property through the use of National Heritage Area funds (Sec. 8001(c)(3)). That said, the National Heritage Area is at its heart a collaboration among the many stakeholders and owners who in turn can undertake (and have undertaken) the preservation, conservation, and interpretation of the lands and waters of the lower San Luis Valley, one of the most permanently preserved cultural landscapes in the nation.

Land management techniques: Chapter 5 identifies the range of agencies and organizations involved in managing natural lands and offers strategies and actions for supporting them, based on the plans listed above with regard to Sec. 8001(d)(2)(B) of the legislation.

Water management techniques: Chapter 5 identifies the existing Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan as a guiding document.

(2) Development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area (a modifying clause for “appropriate land and water management techniques”): The National Heritage Area’s greatest contribution in support of the existing work of the institutions described in Chapter 5 will be to encourage greater interpretation and build wider public appreciation of these resources and the work involved in protecting and managing them, forever. Cooperative agreements will be required to implement specific projects as they arise as the Board of Directors collaborates with governmental agencies but these are deliberately not specified in this plan as too detailed to be land and water management techniques appropriate for inclusion in a long-range management plan for the National Heritage Area. Chapter 5, p. 5-11, offers the most significant idea for a specific project that would require a cooperative agreement if implemented: “A full-blown visitor center with orientation exhibits and educational facilities could ultimately prove useful. Such a facility should be located well away from the national park, which currently serves this purpose in the absence of a facility more broadly addressing recreational access and natural resources across the valley. It would preferably be located not with the resources themselves – avoiding risk of adverse environmental impacts – but in a well-sited commercial area, so that the economic benefits from such an investment could be maximized. An example of such a center, sited in such a way, can be found in Moab, Utah, near several national parks (see sidebar).” Additionally, Chapter 7 states the following on p. 7-22 regarding collaboration with individual interpretive attractions or sites: “Each site is asked to state how it is interested in participating in the National Heritage Area initiative. Based upon mutual interests, a cooperative agreement should be executed between the site and the National Heritage Area affirming the site’s interest in working in collaboration with other National Heritage Area partners in a heritage area-wide interpretive presentation and confirming that the site

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>management that consider and detail the application of appropriate land and water management techniques, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area.</td>
<td>to affect the management of land and water in the lower San Luis Valley by governmental agencies or private owners, nor is it allowed to acquire property through the use of National Heritage Area funds (Sec. 8001(c)(3)). That said, the National Heritage Area is at its heart a collaboration among the many stakeholders and owners who in turn can undertake (and have undertaken) the preservation, conservation, and interpretation of the lands and waters of the lower San Luis Valley, one of the most permanently preserved cultural landscapes in the nation.</td>
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<td>Land management techniques: Chapter 5 identifies the range of agencies and organizations involved in managing natural lands and offers strategies and actions for supporting them, based on the plans listed above with regard to Sec. 8001(d)(2)(B) of the legislation.</td>
<td>Water management techniques: Chapter 5 identifies the existing Rio Grande Watershed Restoration Strategic Plan as a guiding document.</td>
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<td>(2) Development of intergovernmental and interagency cooperative agreements to protect the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area (a modifying clause for “appropriate land and water management techniques”): The National Heritage Area’s greatest contribution in support of the existing work of the institutions described in Chapter 5 will be to encourage greater interpretation and build wider public appreciation of these resources and the work involved in protecting and managing them, forever. Cooperative agreements will be required to implement specific projects as they arise as the Board of Directors collaborates with governmental agencies but these are deliberately not specified in this plan as too detailed to be land and water management techniques appropriate for inclusion in a long-range management plan for the National Heritage Area. Chapter 5, p. 5-11, offers the most significant idea for a specific project that would require a cooperative agreement if implemented: “A full-blown visitor center with orientation exhibits and educational facilities could ultimately prove useful. Such a facility should be located well away from the national park, which currently serves this purpose in the absence of a facility more broadly addressing recreational access and natural resources across the valley. It would preferably be located not with the resources themselves – avoiding risk of adverse environmental impacts – but in a well-sited commercial area, so that the economic benefits from such an investment could be maximized. An example of such a center, sited in such a way, can be found in Moab, Utah, near several national parks (see sidebar).” Additionally, Chapter 7 states the following on p. 7-22 regarding collaboration with individual interpretive attractions or sites: “Each site is asked to state how it is interested in participating in the National Heritage Area initiative. Based upon mutual interests, a cooperative agreement should be executed between the site and the National Heritage Area affirming the site’s interest in working in collaboration with other National Heritage Area partners in a heritage area-wide interpretive presentation and confirming that the site</td>
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<td>(3) DEADLINE.—If a proposed management plan is not submitted to the Secretary by the date that is 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the management entity shall be ineligible to receive additional funding under this section until the date that the Secretary receives and approves the management plan.</td>
<td>will abide by heritage area principles.” (emphasis added) Finally, Chapter 10 cites Sec. 8001(c)(1)(B) regarding the power of the Secretary to work through the management entity to effect cooperative agreements and includes an action on p. 10-18 that states “Maintain a memorandum of understanding or cooperative agreement with the NPS for assistance with Board of Directors operations.” (emphasis added)</td>
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<td>(4) APPROVAL OR DISAPPROVAL OF MANAGEMENT PLAN.—</td>
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<td>(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of receipt of the management plan under paragraph (1), the Secretary, in consultation with the State, shall approve or disapprove the management plan.</td>
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<td>(B) CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL.—In determining whether to approve the management plan, the Secretary shall consider whether—</td>
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<td>(i) the management entity is representative of the diverse interests of the Heritage Area, including governments,</td>
<td>The management entity is representative of the diverse interests of the Heritage Area, including governments, natural and historic resource protection organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and recreational organizations. See current list of board members and their affiliations.</td>
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<td>natural and historic resource protection organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and recreational organizations;</td>
<td>Appendix B, “The Planning Process” describes public outreach undertaken during management planning. Additionally, all meetings of the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors are open to the public.</td>
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<td>(ii) the management entity has afforded adequate opportunity, including public hearings, for public and governmental involvement in the preparation of the management plan; and</td>
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<td>(iii) the resource protection and interpretation strategies contained in the management plan, if implemented, would adequately protect the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Heritage Area.</td>
<td>The Board of Directors believes that the resource protection and interpretation strategies contained in the management plan, if implemented, would adequately protect the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Heritage Area.</td>
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<td>(e) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.— [not applicable]</td>
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<td>(f) PRIVATE PROPERTY AND REGULATORY PROTECTIONS. — [not applicable]</td>
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<td>(g) EVALUATION; REPORT.—</td>
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<td>(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years before the date on which authority for Federal funding terminates for the Heritage Area, the Secretary shall—</td>
<td>[Legislation was passed March 30, 2009; therefore the three-years-before date would be March 29, 2021 (the authorization is for 15 years, March 29, 2024)]</td>
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<td>(A) conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of the Heritage Area; and</td>
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<td>(B) prepare a report in accordance with paragraph (3).</td>
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<td>(2) EVALUATION.—An evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A) shall—</td>
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<td>(A) assess the progress of the management entity with respect to—</td>
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<td>(i) accomplishing the purposes of this section for the Heritage Area; and</td>
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<td>(ii) achieving the goals and objectives of the approved management plan for the Heritage Area;</td>
<td>“Purposes” are not stated within the section of P.L. 111-11 establishing the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.</td>
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| **Goals:** Provided in their entirety in Chapter 1, pp. 1-6, 1-7, and 1-8; reiterated as they apply in the “action chapters” (Chapters 4-10); and listed a third time as they apply to all chapter topics in Chapter 10 beginning on p. 10-4.  
**Objectives:** Strategic objectives are stated at the beginning of each “action chapter,” as follows (page numbers are the beginning point only):  
Chapter 4, p. 4-12  
Chapter 5, p. 5-2  
Chapter 6, p. 6-2  
Chapter 7, p. 7-2  
Chapter 8, p. 8-5  
Chapter 9, p. 9-5  
Chapter 10, p. 10-2  
Strategic objectives are repeated in brief in Appendix I, “Listing of Strategic Objectives and Actions,” and guidance for establishment of work-plan-level objectives is provided in Appendix H, “Sample Implementation Guide for Annual Work Planning.” |
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<td>(B) analyze the Federal, State, local, and private investments in the Heritage Area to determine the leverage and impact of the investments; and</td>
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<td>(C) review the management structure, partnership relationships, and funding of the Heritage Area for purposes of identifying the critical components for sustainability of the Heritage Area.</td>
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