

## Chapter 5

# Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom Heritage Area Management Alternatives

As documented in chapters 2 and 3, the resources in the Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom Heritage Area are worthy of preservation and integrated interpretation. This chapter will describe the management alternatives, which may be appropriate to protect and interpret the important resources in the study area. Four primary management alternatives have been considered: 1) Continuation of Current Practices/No Action; 2) National Heritage Area Designation; 3) Private Non-profit Corporation Management; 4) State Heritage Area Management.

### **Alternative 1: Continuation of Current Practices/No Action**

The National Environmental Policy Act requires that a “no action” alternative be described to serve as a reference against which other actions may be evaluated. No federal designation or additional authority for federal involvement would be pursued under this management alternative. Given available funding, existing entities would continue their individual efforts to preserve and enhance heritage resources. The resources currently owned and operated by incorporated organizations, local, state, and federal government would continue to be maintained and interpreted for public use under existing policies, and, in most cases, in their current status. As with every management alternative, existing land use regulation and policies would remain under the authority of existing governmental agencies. This status would continue for all proposed management alternatives.

The existing National Park Service (NPS) sites in the region would continue their operations. There are five NPS sites in Kansas—Brown v Board of Education, Fort Scott, Fort Larned, Nicodemus and the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve—but no federally designated heritage areas within the state. There would be no new National Park Service (NPS) program dedicated exclusively to providing technical assistance and no additional federal funding. State and local government, private nonprofit organizations and foundations, and for-profit corporations would continue to be the primary sources of funds for the protection and interpretation of heritage resources. Presently, Kansas has not established any state heritage areas.

The size of the region with its varied perspectives, make it difficult to recognize, preserve and celebrate our regional identity, share the stories that illustrate important heritage themes, and link the heritage sites for interpretation and visitation. Even with committed local organizations dedicated to the task, it would be difficult to achieve these objectives. The general lack of connection between thematically related sites and the lack of a distinctive sense of place in the region would continue.

Current activities would proceed, as they do now, without an overall framework that could guide such efforts as they relate to the Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom theme. This management alternative would be unlikely to improve: 1) the development of new and existing attractions; 2) the maintenance and protection of existing resources; 3) the protection of distinctive

places and the distinctive heritage landscape; 4) rural economic and infrastructure development; 5) regional economic development.

### **Alternative 2: National Heritage Area Designation**

This management alternative requires congressional designation of Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom as a national heritage area. The National Park Service defines a National Heritage Area (NHA) as a place “where natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These patterns make NHAs representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in them.” As a strategy, national heritage areas emphasize the protection and conservation of critical natural, cultural, scenic, and historic resources.

Designation as a national heritage area would recognize the importance of Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom in American history. This national designation would acknowledge our distinctive cultural and geographical region as a series of landscapes distinctive enough to attract and keep the strongest and most earnest of those who attempted to settle here. A heritage area managed by the residents themselves would strengthen the sense of identity both within the region itself and for outside visitors. Such a regional approach would encourage the protection and management of cultural and natural resources in a complex landscape. It would also provide a much-needed incentive for the development

of greater community capacity through inter-local cooperation.

Heritage area goals include: increasing public awareness of local history and associated landscapes and the need for preservation, encouraging research on local history and its incorporation into the educational curriculum, enhancing the quality of community character and strengthening the region’s identity. By coordinating the management of cultural and natural resources, the national heritage area will address the economic viability of small towns, rural communities, prairies, open spaces and the business and ranches that make up the region’s landscapes. The formal organization of a national heritage area followed by the preparation of a comprehensive management plan would ensure that participating governments and organizations with their different objectives have an institutionalized process for coordination. The national heritage area would provide the stability necessary for long-range goals to be achieved.

The National Park Service would provide technical assistance to the national heritage area management entity and its associated partners. For example, the partnership between the National Park Service and the management entity would work together toward development of high quality heritage area interpretation and successful regional identity programs.

The Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance (TKHA), a private nonprofit organization, is the leading candidate to be designated as the management entity for the proposed heritage area. Working with technical assistance from the National Park Service, TKHA has been developing the grass-roots support and management expertise to be responsible for managing the heritage area. The federally

designated management entity, TKHA, would include a cross-section of public and private interests, including representatives of state government, municipalities, historic, cultural, and environmental organizations, economic development organizations, educational institutions, and private citizens.

The management entity would be responsible for receiving and disbursing federal funds and would have authority to enter into agreements with the Federal Government. The management entity would be responsible for raising funds to match the federal financial assistance. Federal, state, local, and private historical and cultural sites and natural areas within the heritage area would operate under their own authority and voluntarily work in partnership with the management entity.

TKHA has a proven track record for working in large regions as they developed extensive programming for the Kansas Sesquicentennial, which will be celebrated from 2004 to 2011. For example, TKHA has created two educational brochures, "John Brown in Kansas" and "Underground Railroad in Kansas," to publicize heritage area sub-themes. Members of the TKHA served as the regional planning committee for the heritage area feasibility/suitability study and the committee is currently developing an organizational structure for heritage area management. The committee consists of representatives from throughout the counties included in the proposed heritage area.

The organizational leadership structure for the Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom National Heritage Area currently being considered by TKHA would consist of a Board of Directors with eight to fifteen members. Judge Deanell Tacha,

Chief Judge of the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, has agreed to serve as Board Chair. Directors will be recruited from progressive leaders in the region with experience and contacts that can be used to achieve the goals of the National Heritage Area. The directors will be civic-minded with an entrepreneurial viewpoint. Membership of the Board will also reflect the thematic emphases and geographical areas within the National Heritage Area.

When designation is approved, the BKNHA management entity will prepare a work program and hire staff members. The policies and plans formulated by the Board will be implemented by a staff of three to five people. Staff will include an executive director, marketing and fundraising officer, and a finance and office manager. In addition, a Partnership Panel of local participants would advise the Board and staff, help promote additional partnerships, and assist in heritage area coordination and plan implementation.

Much of the work of building the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area will be accomplished by mobilizing key committees of the Alliance members. This will include management, finance, and marketing committees. The management committee, for example, will prepare guidelines to guide local communities, organizations, and heritage attractions in developing the resources of the heritage area. The finance committee will prepare a conceptual financial plan for the first three years of operation as a national heritage area. This committee also will organize and educate Alliance members and partners to improve their fundraising capacity.

The management committee will also develop a work program of management tasks for

the National Heritage Area. Some important goals of the program include:

Enhancing the existing heritage tourism sites, events, and experiences.

Developing needed new “anchor” facilities or attractions

Creating a network of sites, scenic byways, guides, and maps that tell the Bleeding Kansas story and provide a more tangible visitor experience.

Building the capacity of communities, organizations, heritage attractions, and local businesses to become more viable and stronger partners in a regional effort.

To develop the partnerships necessary to carry out an ambitious work program, the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area management entity will identify Strategic Investment Areas (SIAS) where heritage resources, organized leadership, and cooperative actions are concentrated. Also, the committee will link SIAS with Strategic Investment Partners (SIPS), strong sites/ attractions that are not in potential SIAS, but could play significant role in regional network. Finally, the management committee will identify Aspiring Partners with the potential to develop their capacity so as to join SIAS or become SIPS. In the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area, Strategic Investment Areas could be centered on Wyandotte, Douglas, Geary, Linn, and Allen counties. Strategic Investment Partners may include Fort Scott, a National Historic Landmark in Bourbon County, Kaw Mission, a Kansas State Historical Society site in Morris County, and the Nicodemus Historic District, a National

Historic Landmark, in Graham County.

For the selection of partnerships, the management committee will evaluate the evidence of the area’s heritage, economic and community development through tourism, interpretative programs, geographical linkages, local commitment and leadership, and supportive public policy. Partnerships then will be strengthened through communication and education about NHA benefits and effective development strategies.

TKHA would prepare a heritage area management plan, prioritize projects, conduct public meetings regarding implementation, and implement the plan in conjunction with partners. The comprehensive management plan includes strategies for natural and resource protection, plans for interpretation of resources based on the heritage area theme, and a methodology for including various defined roles for willing public organizations and private individuals, municipalities, federal, state, and local agencies. It is important to note that the heritage area management alternative imposes no new land use regulation on properties located in the area. Willing partnerships and public support are the keys to the success of a national heritage area.

The National Park Service (NPS) could provide the communities as well as cultural, historical, and natural resource organizations within the heritage area with technical assistance and grants for education, interpretation, historic preservation, planning, recreational trail development, and open space conservation. This program would place special emphasis on activities that would serve as model projects. NPS staff would provide technical assistance to the heritage area.

Consulting with the NPS, the management

entity would develop an accessible and comprehensive interpretive and identity program for the heritage area's resources. Its projects could include:

- A signage system including both directional and interpretive signage. A logo-based directional signage system would embrace highways, local routes, and specific destinations. This signage system could contribute to a regional interpretive program including wayside exhibits and other interpretive media. The system would interpret the major regional themes identified by Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom National Heritage Area.
- Heritage area publications such as informational brochures with maps and comprehensive guides similar to the NPS series of park guides.
- Interpretive training provided by NPS to ensure a consistent standard for interpretive programming in the national heritage area. Individual sites in the heritage area would continue to be responsible for their own interpretation.
- Establishment of information centers in the heritage area that would make available a wide array of information concerning attractions, interpretive programs, directions and maps, and food and lodging. The management entity would develop the visitor centers, but would not manage their day-to-day operations. Visitor centers would be at existing information centers, chambers of commerce, public buildings, and

participating cultural institutions.

- Development of educational materials for interpreting the heritage area's themes to students.
- Support for research, inventories, and documentation of heritage resources.

The TKHA would also undertake demonstration projects. These projects could range from historic preservation and adaptive reuse efforts to the development of traveling education kits and other educational outreach services. These projects could serve as models demonstrating appropriate standards for interpretation and visitor services.

The TKHA would be eligible to make grants to local heritage organizations from a designated pool of funds. Grants would be made to organizations carrying out projects identified in the heritage area management plan that meet criteria established by the Partnership Panel, administered by staff, and approved by the Board of Directors.

The financial relationship between a heritage area and the National Park Service usually is authorized for no longer than 15 years. The relationship/partnership between Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom National Heritage Area and NPS will continue after federal funding ceases. BKNHA would continue to thrive, having established funding sources thanks to the seed monies from NPS and the Department of the Interior.

The management entity would be required to provide a 50 percent match for the federal heritage area appropriation. Other federal programs, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), National Historic Landmark

assistance, Historic Preservation Fund, and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), administered by the Federal Highway Administration, could provide matching funds. Grants from state and municipal agencies or private nonprofit foundations and for-profit corporations could provide additional funding for management of the heritage area. (For a detailed conceptual financial plan for the proposed National Heritage Area, see criterion 6, Chapter 6.)

Designation of a national heritage area would not entail federal acquisition of land. The national heritage area designation would not change private property ownership or local decision-making about land use, nor would it change existing land use regulations.

### **Alternative 3: Private Non-profit Management Alternative**

This alternative would rely upon the establishment of a private nonprofit corporation which would promote heritage activities in the Bleeding Kansas region. This management model would require less formal organization and less funding than a national heritage area. Since the nonprofit organization would not have to obtain Congressional approval, satisfy federal standards, or go through annual congressional funding cycles, it could proceed with its initiatives more quickly.

Under this management alternative, the heritage area organization would not have to obtain a 50 percent match for federal funding. If local support and budgets were not sufficient to support a national heritage area, this model could prove effective in implementing such heritage projects as brochures, walking tours, and festivals. However, a private nonprofit heritage organization would be unable to develop a regional signage pro-

gram, visitor centers, and exhibits and extensive research and interpretation of heritage themes.

A private nonprofit heritage organization would have substantially less prestige than a national heritage area. The Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom Heritage Area would not receive the beneficial publicity from being associated with the National Park Service. It would be less likely to attract local financial support and participation in special initiatives and to draw new visitors to the region. The area would not be able to request the NPS assistance for planning and interpretation, which is provided to national heritage areas around the country. The lack of federal designation might make it difficult to gain a share of funding from the state government of Kansas. A locally established private nonprofit heritage program might lack the resources to interpret the major heritage themes identified in this study.

Building sustainable partnerships and balanced infrastructure to successfully build the excitement, pride of place, sense of our roots and landscape preservation requires the initial funding this region currently cannot produce. This is a rural state. The population of the state is less than many counties in the east. While tenaciousness is our trademark and that stick-to-it attitude placed many nationally significant stories about struggle within our landscapes, without the cache of designation and the temporary boost of funding, it will be a few more generations before we reach the goal that so many residents have already identified as one they wish to attain.

#### **Alternative 4: State Heritage Area Management**

The Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom Heritage Area could be managed by an existing institution. The Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area Planning Committee considered this management alternative. However, the state of Kansas does not have a state heritage area program. Budget constraints make it unlikely that the state will create a heritage area for Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom on its own.

The existing county historical societies, local historical organizations, and municipal tourism offices lack the capacity to manage a regional heritage area. There is no regional planning agency in a position to administer a heritage area. Although the Travel and Tourism Division, Kansas Department of Commerce has supported the preparation of the feasibility/suitability study, its mission does not extend to cultural and natural resource interpretation and protection which are significant aspects of heritage area management. Budget constraints limit the capacity of the Kansas State Historical Society to take on the open-ended management responsibilities of a National Heritage Area. Management of the Bleeding Kansas Heritage Area by an existing state institution also could contribute to a lower level of collaboration and resource sharing among local groups within the region.

#### **Conclusion**

National Heritage Areas have been successful in protecting and restoring historic sites, creating greenways and trails, providing better public understanding and appreciation of regional history and associated resources and in creating a special identity for communities

within the designated region. Many organizations can participate and contribute to the creation of a common vision that is based on unique traditions and heritage. Designation of a heritage area often results in compatible economic development, particularly tourism and commercial services related to the preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures, visitor services, recreation, and education.

NHA designation for the Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom Heritage Area would provide a crucial strategy for future protection of the important natural and cultural resources of Kansas related to the free-state heritage. It would provide a cohesive framework within which to tell the important stories of how Kansas and its citizens contributed to the enduring struggle for freedom in the United States. Chapter 3 outlines potential sub-themes that may be valuable for a Bleeding Kansas NHA. Chapter 6 evaluates the feasibility of NHA designation.

