

REVOLUTIONARY WAR INITIATIVES FOCUS ON PRESERVING NEW JERSEY'S HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

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FROM 1775 TO 1783, New Jersey played center stage to a series of events crucial to the nation's struggle for independence. Pivotal battles were fought at Trenton, Princeton and Monmouth. Policy was made and speeches, including General George Washington's farewell orders, were written.

Although few may be aware of it, more Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes took place in New Jersey than in any other state and, more remarkably, much of the state's landscape over which Washington's Army traveled en route from battle to battle remains open space.

Realizing the opportunity and potential to preserve and interpret this unusual wealth of history and natural resources, Congress recently authorized the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study to determine the feasibility of establishing New Jersey's first National Heritage Area – Crossroads of the American Revolution. Morristown National Historical Park, a unit of the National Park Service, is spearheading the study through a cooperative agreement with the Delaware & Raritan Greenway, a private nonprofit organization operating in central New Jersey.

Since 1984, Congress has designated 23 national heritage areas.



Each area is organized through voluntary partnerships between the National Park Service and local governments, organizations and individuals aimed at maximizing resource protection, public appreciation, education and recreational opportunities, and citizen involvement.

A heritage area is defined as an identifiable region with a strong sense of place, where the settled landscape tells a story about the generations of people who have lived there. It is a living landscape recognized for its important history, natural processes, cultural traditions, and economic and social forces that have influenced the area's human settlement and shaped its landscape.

The proposed National Heritage Area will be defined, in part, by a series of connecting trails between Revolutionary War sites, including major sites at Morristown National Historical Park, Washington Crossing State Park, the Old Barracks of Trenton, Princeton Battlefield and Monmouth Battlefield State Parks. Along all trail routes, efforts will be made to identify and interpret the integration of open space, farming and Revolutionary War strategy through interpretive signs and educational materials available to trail users. Historic events and remaining structures will be incorporated into the main trail system, helping to bring the Revolutionary War story to life.

Although Green Acres is targeting significant Revolutionary War sites for acquisition and New Jersey's heritage area will include several public parks, many areas within its boundaries would remain in private ownership. Designation of a national heritage area does not involve federal regulation of private

property. A "management entity" is named by Congress to coordinate the partners' voluntary actions.

The National Park Service views each heritage area as a unique and ambitious experiment in conservation and tourism, providing a venue to celebrate an area's cultural and natural resources. As the main benefactor from this federal initiative, New Jersey has a two-fold interest in supporting and helping to establish the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area. A heritage area would elevate public awareness about the state's role in the American Revolutionary War while preserving a remarkable era of history, and through establishing its boundaries, it would provide further opportunity to preserve and acquire the state's culturally significant open space. Not only would New Jersey be ensuring the continued existence and care of its historic resources, but also the Revolutionary War landscape on which they still stand.

Over the next 18 months, public meetings are being organized by the Delaware and Raritan Greenway to seek public input and support for the heritage area initiative. For more information about the initiative or the public meetings and dates, contact Denise at 973-539-2016 ext. 201 or linda_mead@nps.gov.



