

October 9, 2019

Schoodic Institute NHA Meeting

Notes taken by Dr. Lily Calderwood, UMaine Wild Blueberry Specialist

PRESENTATION 1: Peter Samuel, NHA Northeast Region Program Manager

**What is an NHA?**

NHA = National Heritage Area

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/what-is-a-national-heritage-area.htm>

NHAs are designed to stimulate economic growth while preserving natural, historic and cultural heritage.

-There is very little government regulation.

-There are no restrictions on commercial farming in NHAs.

NHAs are all over the country and typically culturally driven in the Northeast.

There are no NHAs in Maine.

Examples of current NHAs are here:

[https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/visit\\_nhas\\_online.htm](https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/visit_nhas_online.htm)

-The whole Lake Champlain valley of VT/NY is an NHA

-The only other coastal NHA is in Essex MA- lighthouses, tall ships

-The whole city of Baltimore is a NHA

DETAILS

NHAs are generally managed by non profits

The US Congress has to approve new NHAs and it can take a long time (could be 10 yrs).

Funds: A 50% match is required to the federal funds (called federal appropriation) that come in.

There are also state heritage areas and those state funds can be used to match the federal NHA funds. Match can be in-kind – aka matched with volunteer hours etc

- Can also create a grant program to expand the NHA's reach
- Organizations and businesses (such as hospitals) contribute because it benefits them as well
- The most an NHA gets is \$700,000 per year. The NHA that gets this much is the oldest one in the country. Newer NHAs get the least amount and it increases over time. A new NHA gets \$150,000 each yr for the first 3 yrs. During this time the NHA board must make a management plan which is signed off by the Secretary of the Interior. Once that is completed and approved, the NHA will receive up to \$350,000 /yr. All federal appropriations must be matched.

Living landscapes, economic development, recreation, tourism, and education are all encouraged.

NHAs are required to have a strong and engaged board.

\$150,000 = \$700,000 is not a lot of money. What do you do with that money? Trails can be connected, expanded, and signs can be made. One of the main goals of the NHA designation is to have the NPS help deliver a consistent message between all the smaller sites within the NHA- meaning the historical facts are the same each place someone stops to read a sign.

They are not regulated areas like a National Park would be. People live and work in NHAs. Collaboration and partnership is key.

Include tribal nations.

Engaging young people in the stewardship ethic of Downeast Maine would be critical.

Would Acadia be included in the NHA?

NPS encourages NHAs to include National parks within the boundary of the NHA so they can work together. The benefit to rural areas in the NHA are that Acadia would come give talks and possibly have a joint visitor center. This benefits Acadia because they are limited in their local reach. It would allow them to reach the community beyond their boundary. The NPS can bring programming to the community.

Discussion about the boundary of the potential NHA concluded that Schoodic peninsula and northern Hancock county would be included but not MDI- so it would be Washington and Hancock counties. How far north? The NHA boundary is a topic for further discussion.

PRESENTATION 2: Dr. Joe Kelley, UMaine, Coastal Geologist

Studies coastal Maine geology, coastal zone mgmt.

The Downeast region (Hancock and Washington counties) = coastal volcanic rock (granite) east of Penobscot

The Machias and St. Croix rivers are the youngest rivers in Maine and maybe the Nation. Maine has such a rocky coast because the rock has not been eroded away into sand yet.

The Downeast region has a lot of fault lines making it the most seismically active region in the Northeast. Yes, we do have earthquakes here – some of the largest quakes have been in the east.

Other highlights of the Downeast region:

-ART

-Middens – made to be very large towers as a message that there are people here

-There might be a Marsh Center for education in the future (unrelated to the NHA)

-Sardine and Cod history

-Wild Blueberries

-Wreath industry

-Natural beauty

-Native people

-Remote, untouched yet one of the places that Europeans reached first

BREAK OUT SESSIONS:

All groups were asked to identify the following:

What makes the region a natural heritage site?

-natural beauty, land and sea

-active and functioning agriculture and aquaculture

- recreation, arts, and tourism
- 28% of WA county is in conservation

What makes the region a cultural heritage site?

- people are very connected to the land and sea
- resilient, rely on the land for livelihoods, resourceful
- Battle of Margareta in Machias

Why is this region nationally important?

- Baseline Road: beginning of map making for the whole country
- Resources from the region were critical in building the rest of the country
- Famous battles

#### NEXT STEPS

The plan is for Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) to lead the NHA effort. Everyone at the meeting was in agreement and I would say fairly excited about the prospect of this designation. This is not a silver bullet by any means.

The next step is for SCEC to find the funds to do the feasibility study and conduct it within the next 6 months- 1 year. This will be much faster than having the NPS do it for free over the next 5 years. The study will then go to the NPS and Congress would eventually need to approve of this NHA. If approved, the next step is to begin the NHA and in the first 3 years the board must create a management plan.

Senator King and Collins were represented at this meeting and excited about this effort but disappointed with the number of people who turned out.

To make this happen MORE people need to be involved. There is no such thing as too many collaborators. SCEC plans on having meetings in the community for more voices to be heard.