

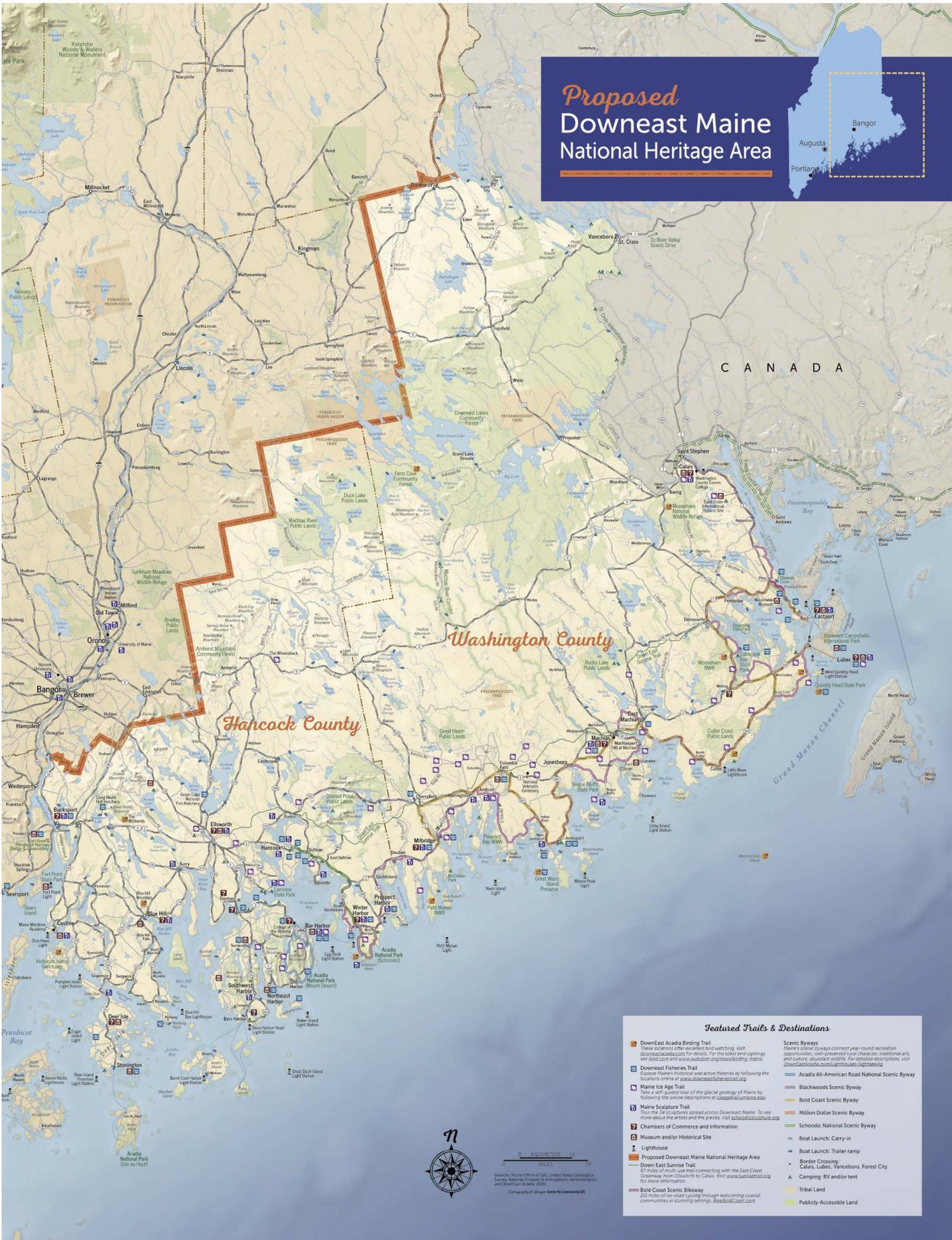


Downeast Maine National Heritage Area

FEASIBILITY STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Proposed Downeast Maine National Heritage Area



Featured Trails & Destinations

- Down East Acadia Birding Trail**
These locations offer excellent bird watching. Visit downeastacadia.com for details. For the latest bird sightings see bird.com and www.birds.org/newsletter.
- Downeast Fisheries Trail**
Explore Maine's historical and active fisheries by following the locations online at www.downeastfisheries.com.
- Maine Ice Age Trail**
Take a self-guided tour of the glacial geology of Maine by following the online directions at glacialmaine.edu.
- Maine Sculpture Trail**
Tour the 24 sculptures spread across Downeast Maine. To see more about the artists and the pieces, visit schools2schools.org.
- Chambers of Commerce and Information**
- Museum and/or Historical Site**
- Lighthouse**
- Proposed Downeast Maine National Heritage Area**
Downeast Maine National Heritage Area
- Down East Sunrise Trail**
87 miles of multi-use trail connecting with the East Coast Greenway from Ellsworth to Calais. Visit www.sunrisetrail.org for more information.
- Bold Coast Scenic Bikeway**
221 miles of six-year cycling through welcoming coastal communities in stunning settings. Visit BikeBoldCoast.com.

Scenic Byways
Maine's scenic byways connect year-round recreation opportunities, well-preserved rural character, traditional arts and culture, abundant wildlife. For general descriptions, visit DownEastAcadia.com/american-road-national-scenic-byway.

- Acadia All-American Road National Scenic Byway**
- Blackwoods Scenic Byway**
- Bold Coast Scenic Byway**
- Million Dollar Scenic Byway**
- Schoodic National Scenic Byway**
- Boat Launch: Carry-in**
- Boat Launch: Trailer ramp**
- Border Crossing: Calais, Lubec, Vanceboro, Forest City**
- Camping: RV and/or tent**
- Tribal Land**
- Publicly-Accessible Land**



Sources: Maine Office of GIS, United States Geological Survey, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, and OpenStreetMap contributors.

Proposed Downeast Maine National Heritage Area Map.

Downeast Maine is located at the easternmost edge of the continental US and at the 45th Parallel. It overlooks and is exposed to the vastness and fury of the Atlantic Ocean. In some ways, Downeast Maine is at the edge of the world. In other ways, it is at the center of a wonderland of natural resources and scenic beauty.





Lobsters, Blueberries, Bicycle - Active fishing villages and prolific blueberry barrens reflect a deep-rooted relationship as people continue to harvest the natural bounty of land and sea, as their ancestors have done for hundreds, even thousands, of years. Photo by Gary Jacobson.



Downeast Maine National Heritage Area

The initiative to seek designation as a National Heritage Area began with local farmers who sought to save the wild blueberry industry. The conversation evolved to reveal a collective regional passion to preserve the landscapes and culture that define Downeast Maine.

What is a National Heritage Area?

A National Heritage Area is a place where the historic relationship between people and landscape has contributed significantly to the cultural and natural heritage of the Nation. It is a place where that heritage story is intact on the landscape today and provides opportunities for community engagement and economic development

The underlying purpose of the NHA program is to support strong, healthy communities. The program provides tools to support community and economic development driven by a community's unique assets and priorities. Goals for the NHA Program are to:

- Inspire long-term citizen engagement in stewarding heritage resources
- Build collaborations and thus capacity to achieve mutual goals
- Develop education programs and learning opportunities around local heritage
- Develop a sustainable tourism industry founded in local culture and outdoor heritage

NHA Designation is national recognition of an area's unique cultural & natural heritage and contributions to the Nation's collective heritage. The Federal designation is approved by Congress through legislation brought forward by state delegates.

The NHA program **does** bring financial benefits with designation. Up to \$350,000 in federal funding is available annually to match local dollars and in-kind contributions 1:1. Funds are provided by the Department of the Interior; technical support is provided by the National Park Service. **All program funds and projects are prioritized and managed by a collaboration of local heritage groups.** This local management entity makes decisions about priority programs, projects, and funding for eligible heritage projects and programs within the NHA region.

NHA Designation does NOT mean that an area becomes a unit of the National Park Service or Federal Government and they are not operated or governed by NPS or Federal Government. NHAs involve no ownership of land, nor are they a tool to regulate land use or remove municipal or private jurisdiction. NHAs do not create new expenses for a community to bear.

IF a National Heritage Area designation is granted, the next step for communities is to create a region-wide NHA Management Plan, essentially a roadmap for developing and then promoting NHA infrastructure and programs. The NHA Management Plan is developed through an extensive public process. It outlines objectives and strategies that align with local and regional economic development goals. **The local management entity then implements the NHA program according to the directives set forth by the public and planning team within the Management Plan.**

The National Heritage Area Program

DOES

- Bring financial benefits with designation.
- Provide up to \$350,000 in federal funding annually to match local dollars and in-kind contributions 1:1. (The local management entity makes decisions about priority programs, projects, and funding for projects and programs within the NHA region.)

DOES NOT

- Mean that an area becomes a unit of the National Park Service or Federal Government.
- Involve ownership of land, nor are they a tool to regulate land use or remove municipal or private jurisdiction.
- Create new expenses for a community to bear.

A Vision for the Downeast Maine National Heritage Area

Communities and organizations across Downeast Maine already share core goals with the National Heritage Area program and implement projects and programs that support them. They all strive in some way to achieve one or more of the following goals:

- Foster community-driven, heritage-based conservation and economic development.
- Create collaboration amongst citizens and long-term commitment to pro-actively shape the future of their communities.
- Inspire stewardship of heritage resources by community members through increased awareness of natural environment and cultural experience.
- Nurture active engagement in learning about and sharing history and heritage.
- Provide a platform for heritage-based economic development by attracting visitors and new residents.

Community members want to support each other and work together, especially across sectors typically seen as unconnected. They want to retain and attract residents while promoting and preserving valued local heritage. They want businesses to thrive, expand, innovate, and increase in number. They want children and families to connect with place and community and be aware of existing and new opportunities for themselves here in DownEast Maine .

The National Heritage Area program focuses on four core values that also directly align with core values of communities and organizations across Downeast Maine.

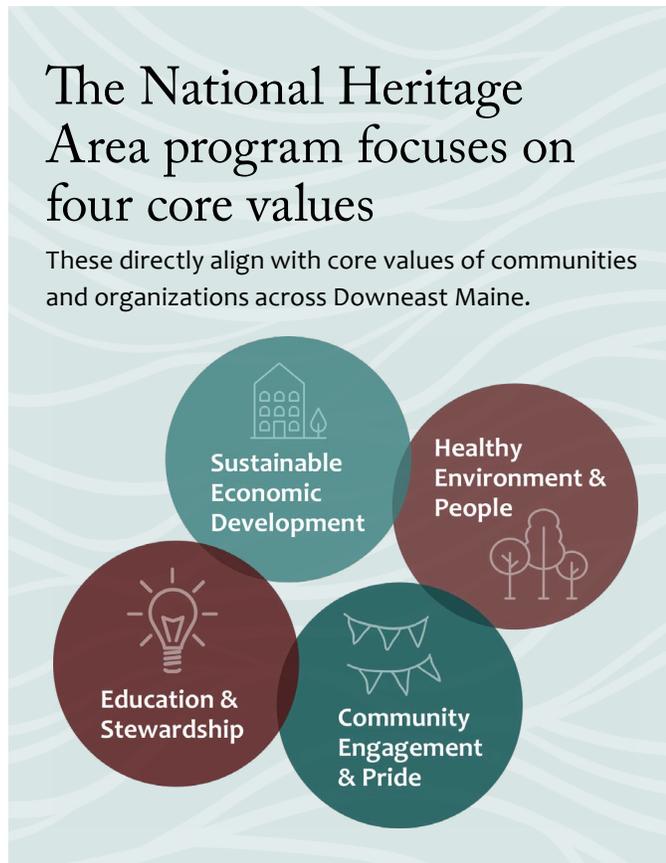
- Sustainable economic development
- Healthy environment and people
- Education and Stewardship
- Community Engagement and Pride



Wild Blueberry Heritage Center - Marie & Dell Emerson built Wild Blueberry Land in 2001. In 2021, their iconic wild blueberry shaped retail shop was transformed into the Wild Blueberry Heritage Center & Museum. The Center celebrates an important part of the traditional Downeast Maine way of life, and the people whose lives are dedicated to wild blueberries.

The National Heritage Area program contributes to a sustainable economy by leveraging federal funds to create jobs, generate revenue for local governments, and sustain local communities through revitalization and heritage tourism. Many NHAs improve water and air quality in their regions through restoration projects. They provide new recreational opportunities and help people to access natural and cultural sites. NHAs can help develop new or improved amenities, unique settings, and educational and volunteer opportunities.

NHAs improve local quality of life through engagement of residents, especially youth and families, in telling our united but separate heritage stories. NHAs connect communities to natural, historic, and cultural sites through educational activities, which promote awareness and fosters stewardship of heritage resources. NHAs engage community members in heritage conservation activities, which strengthens a sense of place and community pride.



The people of Downeast Maine are fiercely proud of their heritage, motivated to strengthen their economy, and committed to developing quality education opportunities that highlight local heritage. The NHA program provides resources to support communities to plan and implement these types of initiatives at the local level.



Monument Cove - Unique land features like those found at Monument Cove on Mount Desert Island reveal the specific geologic formation of Downeast Maine to inspire works of art and wonderment. Photo by Del Higgens.

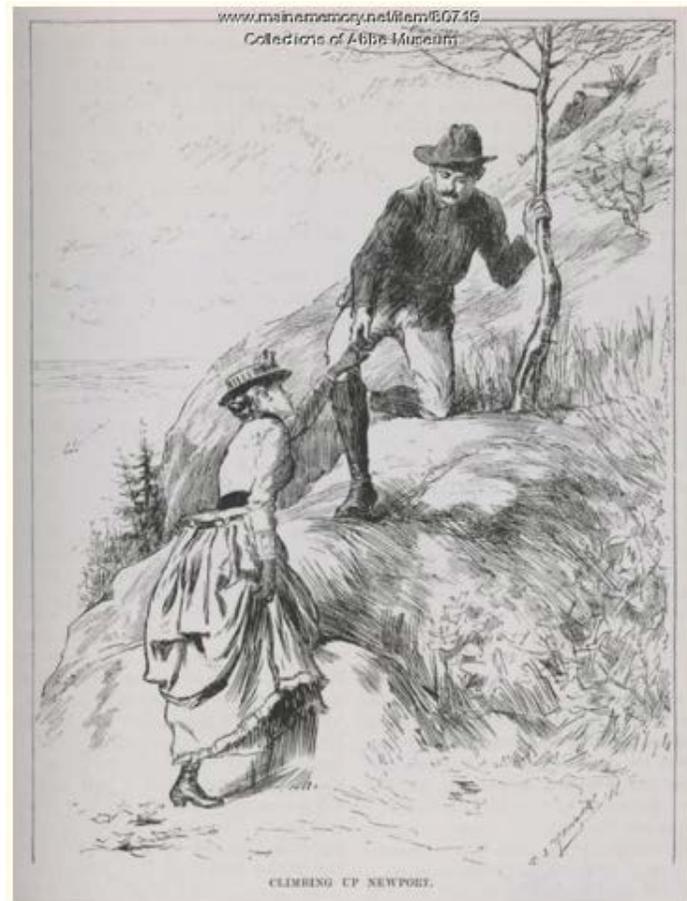
The Feasibility Study

The Feasibility Study is the first step in seeking a National Heritage Area designation. The Feasibility Study determines if the heritage resources and story are nationally significant, whether or not the community supports this idea, and if there is adequate community commitment to successfully manage an NHA program for the long term. The Feasibility Study is conducted by a group of local representatives of the different heritage stories and heritage organizations. Community input is sought from as many residents, business owners, municipalities, and organizations as possible across the region. The Feasibility engages community members to explore these questions together:



Peavey Memorial Library, Eastport - Most libraries in Downeast Maine occupy well-preserved historic structures. Some have always been libraries while others played various roles in their communities.

- What distinctive stories unite the region?
- How is this important to our Nation's heritage?
- How do we want to share those stories?
- Are existing resources sufficient for cohesive, in-depth, interactive storytelling?
- How can we pool and leverage our human and financial resources with other initiatives?
- Does local support and organizational capacity exist to fund, administrate, and manage an NHA for the long-term?
- Is NHA designation the right strategy to achieve community goals?
- How would NHA designation support & expand community conservation and development goals?
- Where are the proposed NHA boundary delineations, based on the above points?



Climbing Champlain Mountain- The beauty and mystery of what is now Acadia National Park on Mt. Desert Island has attracted summer visitors for thousands of years, beginning with the Wabanaki people. Climbing the mountains was a favorite activity for rusticators. These mountains now draw millions of outdoor enthusiasts and tourists to the park annually. Illustration by Charles S. Reinhart from Harper's New Monthly Magazine, August 1886. Photo courtesy of Abbe Museum.

A Feasibility Study for NHA

Designation examines a region's national significance from a number of angles. National Heritage Area designation requires meeting 10 base criteria – the Feasibility Study evaluates whether or not these criteria can be met. The 10 criteria are:

1. An area has an assemblage of natural, historic, or cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed as such an assemblage through partnerships

among public and private entities, and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities;

2. Reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the national story;
3. Provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and /or scenic features;
4. Provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities;
5. The resources important to the identified theme or themes of the area retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation;
6. Residents, business interests, non-profit organizations, and governments within the proposed area are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants including the federal government, and have demonstrated support for designation of the area;
7. The proposed management entity and units of government supporting the designation are willing to commit to working in partnership to develop the heritage area;
8. The proposal is consistent with continued economic activity in the area;
9. A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public; and
10. The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.

This document is the Feasibility Study – the official submission for designation as a National Heritage Area. The Feasibility Study is submitted to Maine’s Congressional Delegates, who introduce it to Congress as a bill. The following chapters examine the assets and capacity of this region to meet the above listed criteria and determine if NHA designation is right for Downeast Maine.



Working Waterfront - Jonesport and Beals are a rough and ready “behind-the-scenery” experience of a DownEast fishing community still populated by generations of lobster fishing families. This is a landscape in action featuring hard-working men and women who provide seafood to the world, including the 2nd highest annual catch of Maine lobster in Maine. Dooryards are piled high with accoutrements of deeply rooted traditions built by generations of salty fishermen - lobster traps, buoys, and boats awaiting their return to sea. Photo by Gina Mazza.

Fulfillment of NHA Baseline Criteria

Designation as a National Heritage Area (NHA) requires the proposed NHA to meet each of 10 base criteria set forth by the National Park Service. The Feasibility Study evaluates whether or not these criteria are met, including examination of a region's national significance and its collective ability to manage and sustain a successful National Heritage Area Program.

Following are the 10 required criteria to be addressed, and a summary of conclusions regarding whether or not the proposal for a Downeast Maine National Heritage Area meets these criteria. The reason behind each conclusion is further detailed in the body of the Feasibility Study, within the chapters referenced below.



Waponahki Museum, Picking Sweet Grass - The Wabanaki people have long utilized sweet grass for making strong containers for daily needs. What was once predominantly utilitarian craft has become a fine art demanding a high price and museum status. The Waponahki Museum displays traditional tools, baskets, arts, artifacts, historic photos, and conducts preservation of the Passamaquoddy language. Life-size mannequins, modeled after actual Passamaquoddy Tribal members, are arranged in settings depicting their traditional day-to-day lifestyle.

1

An area has an assemblage of natural, historic, or cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed as such an assemblage through partnerships among public and private entities, and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities.

A study area must contain a “strategic assemblage” or concentration of resources within a clearly defined geographic area that together form a cohesive landscape and convey a distinct aspect of American heritage. This assemblage forms what is called a “nationally distinctive landscape” and must enable efficient, comprehensive and quality interpretation of a nationally important story.

The American heritage story conveyed through the Downeast Maine National Heritage Area is about the natural resources which enabled humans to thrive in a rugged environment over millennia, and how these resources provided raw materials for development of the growing American nation. It is also about how these abundant and valuable resources enabled European settlement of the Downeast region, which influenced key events that ultimately defined the political boundaries of the eastern United States.

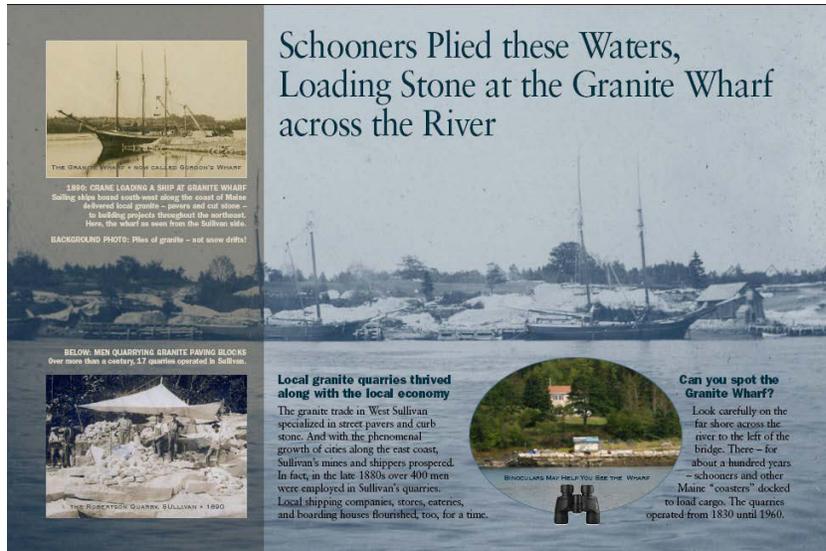


The history of this region’s role in the American nation’s formation remains visible because of the uniquely unspoiled character of Downeast Maine, and the lightly developed rivers, coastline, lakes, forests, and wild blueberry barrens. The coastline and inland waterways that provided travel routes for the Wabanaki and enabled European exploration remain

Civilian Conservation Corps Plein Air Artist - The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was designed to bring together what was considered wasted resources - young men and the land. Franklin Delano Roosevelt called 73rd Congress into Emergency Session to hear and authorize his program in 1933. The CCC brought many young men to Downeast Maine to develop trails and carriage roads at Acadia National Park. The natural beauty inspired this CCC worker to paint the Bubbles and continues to inspire both art and awe. Photo courtesy of Acadia National Park.

navigable and abundant with wildlife. Landscape features that were key to mapping the eastern part of the nation are intact today.

Historic villages and ornate homes built in the nation's infancy remain intact on coves and rivers where timber, shipbuilding, and fisheries industries boomed. Granite and timber industries provided the raw materials to build the infrastructure of these small towns and many early eastern cities.



Gordon's Wharf, Sullivan - The rapid growth of cities along the eastern seaboard allowed granite quarries to prosper. In the late 1800's, in Sullivan alone, over 400 men were employed in these quarries. Sailing vessels carried pavers and curb stones from Gordon's wharf for over 100 years. Illustration from Schoodic National Scenic Byway Interpretive Panel.

Chapter 7 contains a significant (but not exhaustive) inventory of notable natural, historic, and cultural resources directly associated with the nationally important story of Downeast Maine (detailed in **Chapters 5 and 6**).

These resources, when woven together through existing and new collaborations, enable a cohesive, comprehensive interpretation of the nationally important heritage story of Downeast Maine. Because of the large size and diverse resources of this potential heritage area, heritage resources would best be managed as an assemblage by a partnership of local, regional, state, and federal agencies.

Resources within this inventory are currently managed by public and private entities, most of whom already collaborate with others to some extent for planning, development, interpretation, and promotion. Numerous opportunities for partnership development exist within the two-county region, and many groups have expressed their willingness to work in partnership to implement the National Heritage Area.

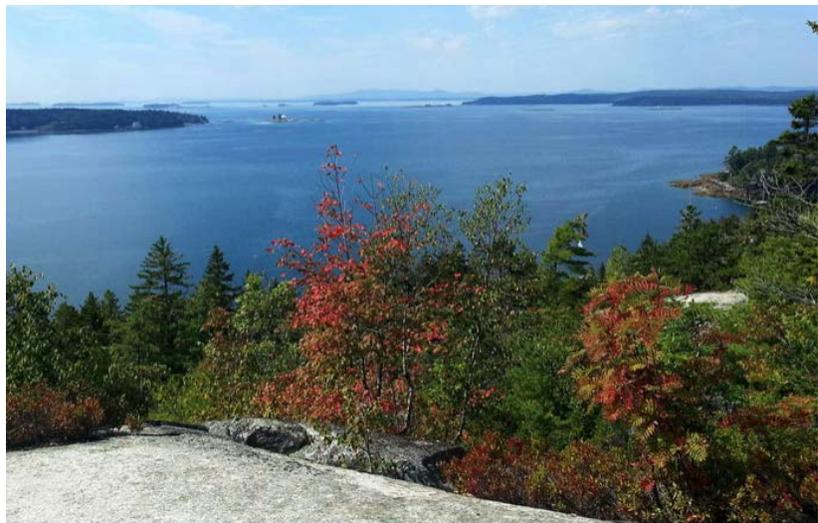
Strengthening existing partnerships through the NHA program creates capacity to establish regional preservation and educational priorities. It would enable development of comprehensive, cohesive educational and interpretive heritage and open space programs and recreational opportunities. An NHA Management Entity composed of public/private partnerships and supported by dedicated staff could coordinate partnership efforts and promote the National Heritage Area as a whole.

2

[This assemblage of resources] Reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the national story.

A Significance Statement and Interpretive Theme(s) are required as part of the Feasibility Study. The Significance Statement expresses why and how a proposed area is nationally important and what exceptional values or qualities it holds that demonstrate this. Interpretive themes support the most important ideas or concepts within the Significance Statement and help communicate the area's significance and its relevance to people visiting or living within a National Heritage Area.

The significance statement, interpretive themes, and historic context detailed in **Chapters 5 and 6** convey how the people, places, and events associated with Downeast Maine contribute to and continue to represent the broader national heritage. Together with the inventory of resources provided in **Chapter 7**, **Chapters 5 and 6** outline a solid thematic framework to support a National Heritage Area in Downeast Maine.



Lookout Rock, Brooksville - Lookout Rock, now a public preserve protected by Maine Coast Heritage Trust, was until recently held in ownership by the same family since the Revolutionary War. Photo by Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

The rich natural resources of Downeast Maine enabled the Wabanahki to thrive for 12,000 years, attracted the first French settlement in the nation, sparked the first naval battle of the American Revolution, and provided vital building materials and food supplies for growing American cities. The natural resources that supported a thriving human population and helped to build the American nation remain intact and vital to the culture, environment, economy, and identity of Downeast Maine.

Fisheries, forest products, agriculture, wild blueberries, outdoor recreation, and tourism are the heart of the region's heritage. These industries continue to drive the local economy across

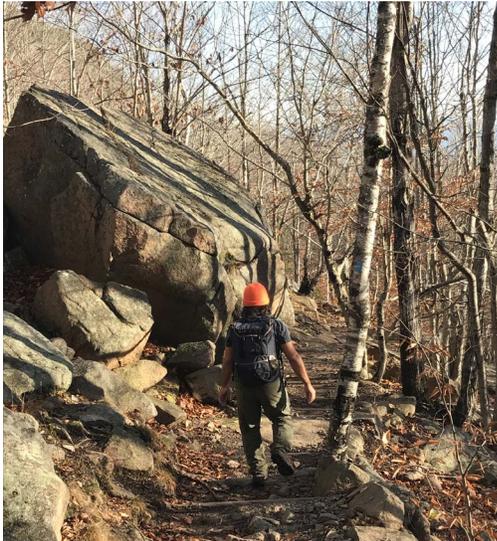
Downeast Maine. The people of Downeast Maine continue to innovate and grow while fiercely protecting their way of life within the context and spirit of community, history, tradition, climate, land, and water.



Maine Sculpture Trail - The Schoodic International Sculpture Symposium was founded by a granite sculptor who grew up on a former granite quarry in Steuben. Five Symposia were attended by internationally renowned sculptors, resulting in a world class collection of large granite works of art that continue the legacy of the region's granite industry through the Maine Sculpture Trail. This sculpture on the Penobscot River in Bucksport frames two other significant structures constructed from granite, the Penobscot Narrows Bridge Observatory and Fort Knox. The Maine Sculpture Trail contributes to the International Sculpture Trail which extends between Downeast Maine and New Brunswick, Canada.

3

[This assemblage of intact resources] Provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and for scenic features.



Pictured above: Hiking Acadia - Acadia National Park is an exemplary location to view the geomorphology of Downeast Maine and effects of the Laurentide Ice Sheet on the landscape. The depth of the granite bedrock layer is visible in the rounded granite bald mountains, and the force of the glacier is visible in the sheared cliffs and gigantic erratic boulders scattered throughout the forest.

Chapter 7 provides lists of opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and scenic features. Opportunities were identified by community members through surveys, community discussions, conversations at board meetings of regional partners, previous planning studies, and one-on-one interviews. These opportunities identify ways to build upon existing resources to expand capacity, strengthen partnerships, and generally create new and more opportunities to connect with and commemorate the people and places that make up Downeast Maine. These lists are in no way exhaustive and will grow as NHA planning continues. Opportunities listed in **Chapter 7**, and those to follow, will inform the next phase of participation in the National Heritage Areas program – creation of a Management Plan to guide development and promotion of the Downeast Maine National Heritage Area.



Great Wass Island Preserve - Great Wass Island Preserve, protected by The Nature Conservancy, projects farther out to sea than any other land mass in eastern Maine. Extreme conditions like constant wind, salt spray, harsh winter storms, and cool summers greatly influence the species types found here and creates unique ecosystems. Great Wass contains maritime slope bogs and raised bogs which are unique to this part of the state. The Preserve supports one of Maine's largest stands of coastal jack pine, one which has evolved to successfully reproduce without the heat of fire typically required to open seed cones.

4

[This assemblage of intact resources] Provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.

The region's unparalleled natural beauty and outdoor recreation assets remain a primary draw to residents and visitors of all walks of life.

Chapter 7 provides lists of recreational and educational opportunities identified by community members through surveys, community discussions, conversations at board meetings of regional partners, and one-on-one interviews. These opportunities identify ways to build upon existing resources to expand capacity, strengthen partnerships, and generally create new and more opportunities to connect with and commemorate the people and places that make up Downeast Maine. These lists are in no way exhaustive and will grow as NHA planning continues. Opportunities listed in **Chapter 7**, and those to follow, will inform the next phase of participation in the National Heritage Areas program – development and promotion of the Downeast Maine National Heritage Area.



Rock Climbing Great Head, Acadia - Climbing in Acadia National Park offers a variety of fine climbs on small cliffs created during the last continental glaciation. The solid, course-grained pink granite ledges of Acadia National Park offer dramatic sea cliff climbing not commonly available elsewhere in the United States. Photo by Meg Keay.



At left: Lubec Landmarks Tidal Pool Tour - Tours with local land trusts and Registered Maine Guides provide immersive experiences for residents and visitors who want to get up close and personal with the diversity of sea life along the Downeast coast. Photo by APPLE.

5

The resources important to the identified theme or themes of the area retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation.

The “strategic assemblage” of natural, cultural, and historic resources related to the nationally important story must maintain a high level of physical and cultural integrity, or intactness, necessary to enable efficient, comprehensive and quality interpretation of that story.

Despite several hundred years of substantial change, the Wabanaki people remain connected with their culture and continue traditions within their schools, cultural centers, and communities, and the Passamaquoddy continue to live on and maintain rights to a portion of their native homelands in Downeast Maine.



Lost Fishermen’s Memorial Park Sculpture Dedication Ceremony - The Lost Fisherman’s Memorial Park in Lubec honors fishermen that perished in the waters of Washington County, Maine and Charlotte County, New Brunswick, Canada, or fishermen that lived in those two counties and were lost in other waters while fishing. The Wave sculpture, created from granite by local sculptor Jesse Salisbury, is engraved with the names of these fishermen lost between the year 1900 and present day. The Memorial is located adjacent to the Lubec Channel between the US and Canada, where the terrible and beautiful power of the sea is visible in the rushing tides. Photo by Johanna Billings.

Although industrial resource extraction in Downeast Maine started as far back as the 1700's, Downeast Maine remains one of the last places in this country to be highly developed. After the industrial boom periods of the 1800's and 1900's waned, industry grew more slowly here than elsewhere in the state, in New England, or even in the neighboring provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The gradual and modest level of development allows the relationship between people and land to remain strong and the landscape to retain key elements of our nation's natural and cultural stories.

For the past two-plus decades communities within DownEast Acadia have partnered locally, regionally, and with state agencies to plan and implement projects, programs, strategies, and policies that leverage cultural and natural resources as an economic and community development tool. Although the plans, policies, and programs are varied and the oversight organizations are diverse, they all share a goal of health, education, continuity, and prosperity for the human, environmental, cultural, historic, business, and scenic assets of DownEast Acadia communities.

Chapters 7 outlines a long list of resources directly related to the nationally important story which retain the integrity needed to support National Heritage Area interpretation in Downeast Maine.



The Good Life of Helen & Scott Nearing - The Good Life Center in Harborside is the final home of Helen and Scott Nearing, who embodied a philosophy of sustainable living through homesteading that has come to be recognized as a centerpiece of America's "Back to the Land" and "Simple Living" movements. The Good Life Center perpetuates the legacy of Helen and Scott Nearing through its programming that educations and advocates around simple and sustainable living skills, social and economic justice, organic gardening, and the non-exploitation of animals. Photo by The Blessing Bucket.

6

Residents, business interests, non-profit organizations, and governments within the proposed area are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants including the federal government, and have demonstrated support for designation of the area.

The significant and consistent public input and information gathered over a dozen or more years underscores that the Downeast Maine study area has a unique and nationally important story beloved by many, as well as the potential and desire to better support interpretation of that story and expand on opportunities.

Nearly 100% of people who provided input during the years-long planning process support establishing a National Heritage Area in Downeast Maine.

Public discussions about NHA designation took place over the course of several years prior to officially conducting a Feasibility Study. Beginning with smaller focus groups, the conversation widened to eventually include multiple interest groups from communities across both Washington and Hancock Counties. The public provided input through community convenings, public discussions, organization board meetings, one-on-

one, and online. Input was solicited from local, regional, state, and national groups. A core team of 13 people representing key heritage sectors helped guide the development of this Feasibility Study. They also helped solicit input from the general public, municipal and community leaders, and organization members.

Ultimately, nearly 100% of people involved in the planning process express full support of the proposed National Heritage Area. See **Chapter 3** for details on community involvement; see **Appendix B** for Letters of Support and other statements of endorsement.

7

The proposed management entity and units of government supporting the designation are willing to commit to working in partnership to develop the heritage area.

The proposed management entity, a wide range of partners, and the roles of each are outlined in **Chapter 10** Long Term Management and Funding. **Appendix B** includes Letters of Support from many of these partners.

SCEC programs include a diversity of partner organizations and funding sources from local to federal. Partners currently engage in a broad range of projects and programs that align with educational, economic, community, recreation, and open space goals of the NHA. Several of SCEC's existing partners are committed to and actively participate in assessing the feasibility of joining the National Heritage Area Program. These relationships will be carried forward into the NHA Management Entity.

Success for the NHA program over such a large region requires coordinated partnerships amongst all involved. Partners in NHA planning have expressed their commitment to continued collaboration with a broad range of stakeholder organizations to develop the heritage area (see letters of support and endorsements in **Appendix B**). Most projects will be undertaken by partner organizations with the Management Entity providing technical assistance, coordination, promotion, and grant funds for appropriate projects. The Management Entity will make decisions about and facilitate priority regional projects & programs. Units of government and organizations directly or indirectly supporting the designation will contribute through projects that fit their priorities and also advance NHA goals.

8

The proposal is consistent with continued economic activity in the area.



Migrant Raker - Downeast Maine is famous for its lowbush wild blueberry, the official state fruit of Maine. The region is the single-largest overall producer of blueberries in the United States. Overall, Maine's wild blueberry industry includes 450 growers, and generates an estimated \$250 million in annual economic impact. Multigenerational wild blueberry farms are common in Downeast Maine and have provided important seasonal income for local and migrant families for roughly 100 years. Photo by Sue Schmid.

A National Heritage Area designation in DownEast Acadia will support continued economic development that celebrates and supports the people who live, work, and play here. See **Chapter 9** for details that back this statement.

The people of Downeast Maine are fiercely proud of their heritage. They are determined to strengthen the economy through industries that reflect long standing local values. They want quality education opportunities for all ages. They strive to retain vitality in village centers and facilitate social and cultural connections across communities.

Community members want to support each other and work together, especially across sectors typically seen as unconnected. They want to retain and attract residents while promoting and preserving valued local heritage. They want businesses to thrive, expand, innovate, and increase in number. They want children and families to connect with place and community and be aware of existing and new opportunities for themselves here in DownEast Maine.

The underlying purpose of the NHA program is to support strong, healthy communities. The program provides tools to support community and economic development driven by a community's unique assets and priorities. It contributes resources to support heritage preservation

through initiatives that matter locally.

NHA Designation does NOT mean that an area becomes a unit of the National Park Service or Federal Government and they are not operated or governed by NPS or Federal Government. A local management entity implements the NHA program according to the directives set forth by the

public and the planning team during the development and promotion planning phase.

NHAs involve no ownership of land, nor are they a tool to regulate land use or remove municipal or private jurisdiction. NHAs do NOT create new expenses for a community to bear – the program provides matching funds to support local heritage initiatives.

The National Heritage Area program focuses on four core values that also directly align with core values of communities and organizations across Downeast Maine.

1. Sustainable economic development
2. Healthy environment and people
3. Education and Stewardship
4. Community Engagement and Pride

The National Heritage Area program supports local and regional economic development in three important ways:

1. It engages and unites residents around shared values to strengthen the economy and Downeast way of life.
2. It assists people to explore the opportunities that exist in the region, thus helping attract and retain a sustainable population and demographic.
3. It creates awareness of and interaction with heritage stories to help strengthen pride-of-place and nurture stewards of cultural and natural heritage.



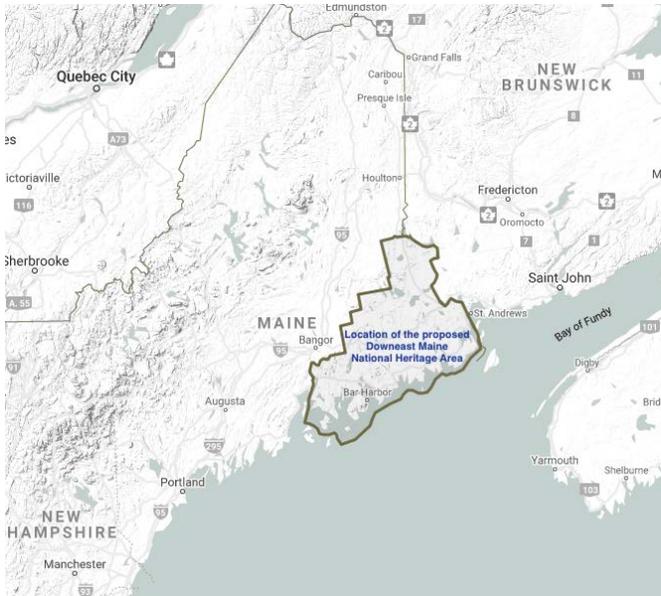
Seaweed Harvester - The cold, nutrient rich waters provide a highly productive marine environment for a range of sea weeds including sugar kelp, edible kelp, Irish moss, and dulse. Seaweed was important to the earliest human inhabitants of Downeast Maine, the Wabanaki people, European colonizers, and continues to be important in the present day. Downeast Maine is growing as a globally important resource for edible and commercial seaweeds but is a relatively new industry. The sea vegetable fishery has increased in landings, number of wild harvesters, aquaculture sites, and public demand over the last fifty years. Commercial aquaculture has been in place for approximately ten years. Photo courtesy of The Greenhorns, Smithereen Farm.



Guided Canoe Trip - Registered Maine Guides are recognized around the world as the gold standard in outdoor skills and knowledge and have a long and colorful history as storytellers and adventurers. Sporting camps and guiding services have provided employment and recreation for hundreds of years in Downeast Maine, especially in the northern parts of the region. Some remaining sporting camps have been in operation through generations of family members, others through new owners and long traditions. Hunting, trapping, and fishing were once the predominant activities, but modern camps and guides now offer recreational paddling, hiking, wildlife watching, and camping. Photo by Tessa Ftorek.

9

A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public.



The Downeast Maine National Heritage Area includes all of Washington and Hancock counties.

An October 2019 Summit was convened to broaden the conversation with stakeholders and to consider all the stories of Downeast Maine. The Summit was attended by participants from local businesses and non-profit organizations in both Washington and Hancock Counties. Although the Summit did not attempt to define a geographic scope for the proposed NHA, participants agreed that important framing determinants for the boundary are the glacially influenced landscape, natural resources economy, and shared history.

The necessary decision about where to draw the NHA boundary raised questions about whether or not to include Mount

Desert Island, or indeed any of Hancock County at all. The possibility of excluding everything west of the Schoodic region was also discussed. Ultimately, people agreed that a National Heritage Area boundary inclusive of both counties will bring more strength to all communities to connect residents, manage visitors, and leverage opportunities. See **Chapter 4** for details on choosing the geographic boundaries of the National Heritage Area.

The geographic area proposed for designation as a National Heritage Area includes the entirety of Washington and Hancock Counties, from the St. Croix River to the Penobscot River, and from the Bold Coast to the Grand Lakes. The **Downeast Maine National Heritage Area** refers to this two-county region.

10

The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.

A long-term plan for development, implementation, promotion, and management of the Downeast Maine National Heritage Area is detailed in **Chapter 10**, Long Term Management and Funding.

No Heritage Area will succeed without a strong and well-coordinated Management Entity and organizational partners guiding it. Given the many challenges inherent in establishing and maintaining a National Heritage Area, the stability or capacity of the Management Entity itself should not be in question. The Entity must have a proven track record of effectiveness in setting and achieving program goals in a collaborative environment and responsible management of large amounts of federal and other funds. The Management Entity must be a 501c3 organization or operate in partnership with one.

The Management Entity will be representative both geographically and thematically of the entire National Heritage Area, while remaining small enough to function effectively. Individual members of the Management Entity will represent a diverse skill set to support the extensive work required. Board members should bring skills and knowledge that fill NHA program needs.

Downeast Maine already contains many organizations whose missions complement each other and frequently overlap. They serve on each other's Boards and committees, partner on projects & programs, and seek funding from the same sources. Adding another 501c3 to the region would create further competition for volunteers, committed Board members, and funding. Start-up nonprofits can struggle to raise adequate cashmatch in the first years. Further aligning the missions and boosting the capacity of heritage-related organizations and community groups is a primary goal for joining the NHA program.

Very few existing entities in Downeast Maine have broad enough missions to represent the full intent of the National Heritage Area Program, and very few have the staff or other resources to dedicate to managing the program to the extent necessary. Therefore, a collaborative board composed of existing organizations and a 501c3 Fiscal Sponsor is the recommended management structure. Partnering with an established 501c3 allows the Downeast Maine NHA Management Entity to focus on its mission to preserve, promote, and build upon the region's valued heritage.

The core Feasibility Study planning team determined that Sunrise County Economic Council (SCEC) is the best entity to provide 501c3 status, fiscal administration, and staffing for the NHA Management Entity. The mission, programs, and regional coverage of SCEC and their many partners align with National Heritage Area priorities and regional heritage goals. SCEC has provided fiscal sponsorship and staff to convene the public and complete the Feasibility Study.

SCEC supports the Downeast National Heritage Area program goals through all aspects of their strategic plan. SCEC initiates and facilitates the creation of jobs and prosperity with economic, workforce, infrastructure, health and wellness, and leadership development as primary themes. SCEC works with a consortium of community-minded businesses, not-for-profit organizations, municipalities and citizens to achieve this mission.

Acknowledgements

The initiative to seek designation as a National Heritage Area began with small farmers who sought to save the wild blueberry industry. The conversation evolved to reveal a collective regional passion to preserve the landscapes and culture that define Downeast Maine.

Thank you to all of the organizations, community members, and advisors whose passion and commitment made the completion of this Feasibility Study possible.

And, thank you the people who have come before us, to those here today, and those who will come after us who care for the land, water, wildlife, and people of this place, and who have helped define what we call Downeast Maine.

This document was written and compiled by Sunrise County Economic Council in partnership with a Working Group* that included representatives from different aspects of the Downeast Maine heritage story. Staff time was provided by Sunrise County Economic Council and Working Group member organizations. A broad range of community members provided valuable input and information.

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**see Chapters 3 and 10 for information about Working Group members*



Further Reading

[Read the complete feasibility study online](#) | [Download the study as a PDF](#)

Download by chapter (PDF):

[Chapter 1: Downeast Maine National Heritage Area](#)

[Chapter 2: Fulfillment of NHA Baseline Criteria](#)

[Chapter 3: Community Planning & Support](#)

[Chapter 4: Proposed Location & Introduction to the Region](#)

[Chapter 5: Downeast Maine's Nationally Significant Heritage Story](#)

[Chapter 6: A Historical Context of Downeast Maine's National Heritage](#)

[Chapter 7: Local Resources, Regional Opportunity](#)

[Chapter 8: Alternatives to NHA Designation](#)

[Chapter 9: Local & Regional Economic Activity](#)

[Chapter 10: Long-Term Management & Funding of the Downeast Maine NHA](#)

[Appendix A: Community Discussions & Invitations for Feedback](#)

[Appendix B: Letters of Support](#)



To provide feedback on this Feasibility Study, or to learn how to participate in the Downeast Maine National Heritage Area program, please visit: sunrisecounty.org/national-heritage-area-program or call 207-707-2057.

Learn more about about the National Heritage Areas Program :
nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/index.htm.

Learn about other National Heritage Areas around the Country:
nationalheritageareas.us/find-your-nha/.

Read about Legislation Pertaining to National Heritage Areas:
doi.gov/ocl/national-heritage-areas.

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