

FLORIDA PANHANDLE MARITIME NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



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What is a National Heritage Area?

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are places where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to form cohesive, nationally important landscapes. Unlike national parks, NHAs are large lived-in landscapes. Consequently, NHA entities collaborate to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs. Designation will not affect the properties' ownership and it will not impose any new regulation on any property.



While the Florida Panhandle is known internationally for its white sandy beaches, the state's shipwreck trails off its coast are open for divers to experience the area's maritime heritage in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Feasibility Study

The first step to NHA designation is to conduct a feasibility study, which includes steps such as defining the study area, gaging public involvement, compiling an inventory of assets, and assessing and evaluating resources in the area. In August 2018 the University of West Florida Askew

Institute for Multidisciplinary Studies initiated a feasibility study with the objective to designate a NHA in the Florida Panhandle. We encourage all the stakeholders to join us in this progressive initiative that can result in sustainable preservation of our resources and promotion of the Panhandle Area nationally.



Fort San Carlos de Barrancas in Pensacola is one of seven National Historic Landmarks located within the Florida Panhandle.

The Florida Panhandle Area is home to many historical firsts as well as unique remaining natural resources in the United States. We would like to appreciate these resources and tell their story to the nation and world by designating the area as a NHA. Aiming to promote heritage tourism, highlight our unique American history and diversity

of heritage, and encourage historic preservation and sustainable development, we looked for a way to brand the area with a national title, to develop the economy and to promote communities' sense of character and identity. Designation as a NHA by the U.S. Congress would go a long way toward achieving these goals.



The Florida Panhandle has thousands of recorded archaeological sites, many of which are nationally significant. The Luna Settlement and Shipwreck Sites include the remains of the U.S.'s oldest multi-year European settlement.

What are the benefits of NHAs?

- Generates economic development (studies show that all NHAs in the U.S. generate \$12.9 billion/yr & \$1.2 billion in tax revenue annually)
- Creates jobs (studies show that all NHAs in the U.S. generate, create, and support 148,000 jobs)
- Brands the area with a national title
- Advocates collaboration between local governments and organizations
- Promotes cultural tourism
- Encourages historic preservation (NPS grants, etc.)
- Fosters a sense of identity in communities
- Sparks pride as the first exclusive NHA in the state of Florida
- Receives recurring federal funding from National Park Service
- Makes available technical assistance within area

A young girl with curly hair, wearing a leopard print dress, is smiling and operating a wooden mangle machine. The machine has a large green hand crank and a wooden roller. The background shows a museum exhibit with wooden logs and a red railing.

The Florida Panhandle has over 70 heritage tourism destinations. It also includes 113 historic places and 19 historic districts listed on the National Register.

Six National Seashore Areas are in the Florida Panhandle, all part of Gulf Islands.



The U.S. has only 49 NHAs. We hope to become the 50th and only exclusive NHA in Florida. Proposed areas must meet ten criteria in order to be considered eligible for NHA status by the National Park Service. The feasibility study must demonstrate this by creating a unique theme that connects the resources in our area with the story of the United States.

We believe the maritime landscape of the Florida Panhandle and the resilience of its people are the key. The maritime landscape of the Florida Panhandle—its rivers, coasts, bays, sounds, and the lands they connect—contributed to the United States’ national defense, industry, economy, tourism, and innovation as it is today.



The history of the U.S. military has deep roots in the Florida Panhandle, and several key bases remain a vibrant part of the region today.

Proposed Boundary Area

Following participant feedback after public meetings and discussions with historians, archaeologists, environmental specialists, and experts in the field, the following scenario is the potential area for designation. We will collect and analyze information for the counties in this area, depending on the input different entities offer to the Florida Panhandle Maritime National Heritage Area effort. Following final reviews by experts and stakeholders, the area boundary will be finalized and presented in the feasibility study.



The proposed area boundary covers the Panhandle from the Florida state line at the Perdido River in the west, to Gadsden and Wakulla County lines in the east, the Florida state line in the north, and the Gulf of Mexico coast in the south. Final decision regarding

the area boundary depends on the information we can collect from different sites and entities, the information local people share with us, the degree to which the sites and places fit with the criteria for designation, and the collaboration that people and different entities provide.



The Apalachicola River is one of nine “Outstanding Florida Waters” in the Panhandle. Several of the 29 Florida State Parks within the area provide public access to these resources.

We Need Your Help

Agencies, individuals, governments, and organizations that are in the area and are willing to join the potential designation can help make it happen by writing a letter of support. Without widespread community support, an NHA designation is not possible. A template for the Florida Panhandle Maritime National Heritage Area letter of support is available. Whether you write your own or use our template, letters of support should include the following details:

- The role your organization or entity plays in preserving and promoting Panhandle cultural and/or natural resources.
- The importance of a designated area to promote the local economy, tourism, and education in your own words.
- How your organization would support the project and provide future services. This does not impose any new commitments on you or your entity. You can support the project with what you are already doing, for instance, if you are organizing educational programs, using volunteers, or providing places that can be used for activities, etc. These are all what you are already doing. This letter only shows that you are collaborating with the project.

Web Resources | How to Connect

For more information about National Heritage Areas, please check:

www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/index.htm

To send us your opinions, comments, stories, questions, or letters of support,

please contact: Dr. Sorna Khakzad at skhakzad@uwf.edu

To know more about the Florida Panhandle National Heritage Area Feasibility Study and our events schedule, please check our website: www.uwf.edu/fpnha

Or see our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/FloridaPanhandleNHA/

