

Written Testimony

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands

House Committee on Natural Resources

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Prepared by
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St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc. and the
Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance

Statement for the Hearing

Thank you, Mister Chairman and Members of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony here today. Thank you as well to the many members of Florida congressional delegation for their support of our proposed National Heritage Area and a special thanks to Congressmen John Rutherford, Al Lawson and Michael Waltz.

I am Kathy Fleming and I am the executive director of the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum in St. Augustine, Florida. I am also the director for the Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance. On behalf of the Alliance, we thank the committee for your consideration of House Bill 2107 which would establish the Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area in the State of Florida.

Community members and organizations which make up the Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance have met over the years to share how the rich maritime landscape, converging waterways and the Atlantic Ocean have uniquely shaped the culture and traditions of Northeast Florida's Nassau, Duval, St. Johns and Flagler counties. The goal of this region's National Heritage Area is to celebrate the unique heritage and natural resources of the region and to recognize this area as a special place in America.

The Heritage Area Alliance is dedicated to "connecting residents and visitors with the historic, cultural, natural, recreational and scenic assets of the region through education, preservation and promotion of the area's distinctive stories, resources and traditions." To achieve this goal, the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum and the Heritage Area Alliance have worked together to prepare a feasibility study for a Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area federal designation in which we have also coordinated with the National Park Service. We have included some samples of selected sections of the feasibility study for the record in my testimony for your review.

This feasibility study is an introduction to a unique, scenic, and historic maritime landscape. From the Native Americans who lived here first, to the diverse people who call the area home today, this region has been shaped by the sea that borders it. Here is where Ponce de Leon's navigator took his northern most compass

reading before he landed in 1513 to name La Florida. Here is the same landscape that attracted Jean Ribault's French colony at Fort Caroline, near modern day Jacksonville, FL, in 1562. Here also the Spanish under the command of Pedro Menendez de Aviles created a settlement in 1565 that became St. Augustine, the Nation's oldest, continually occupied, European city. About 60 miles from the ancient city's shallow but historic port of call, the powerful Gulf Stream makes its final turn east, flowing from the Caribbean trade routes back toward Europe and significantly, Spain, the world's foremost maritime power in the 16th century. This special, multi-cultural geographical region has influenced the growth and establishment of our nation, along with Northeast Florida's traditions and history, from its maritime normative environment to its tourism-based economy.

We have many special stories to tell from our region but one that I want to highlight in my remarks today is the one of Fort Mose which is located just north of St. Augustine and within the boundaries of the proposed NHA. The historic significance of the Fort Mose site to the African American cultural history is tremendous. In 1738, Garcia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, known as Fort Mose, was established as the first legally sanctioned community of freed slaves in what is now known as the United States. At that time the site was located approximately two miles north of St. Augustine, Fort Mose served as the northern defense line to the city. Most of the community of Fort Mose consisted of escaped or runaway slaves from the British colony of the South Carolina.

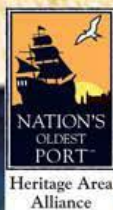
This is just one of many special stories from our diverse region. We have received hundreds of letters and resolutions of support from throughout the region. The concept of a Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area would afford national and international recognition of the region's maritime legacy and multicultural history. It would offer a means of permanent recognition and regional branding.

This multi-year, community-based effort would highlight northeast Florida's distinctive maritime and multicultural heritage and the region's contributions to U.S. history. The maritime and multicultural heritage of this country is rooted in what occurred in the port city of St. Augustine, Florida, the Nation's Oldest Port region more than four centuries ago. Northeast Florida was truly a center of cultural and commercial exchange and a foundation from which the rest of America sprang. This was an area that brought together cultures and commerce

from all over the world-- from other areas of the Americas and Caribbean Islands, Europe and Africa via the Atlantic Ocean.

We thank you again for the time today and thank you for your consideration. We are committed to utilizing any support that we receive from the National Park Service's NHA program wisely and with the goal of economic self-sufficiency for our NHA. I look forward to your comments and questions.

Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area Feasibility Study



*Prepared by the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum, Inc.
and the Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area
Alliance*

Selected Samples from the Feasibility Study

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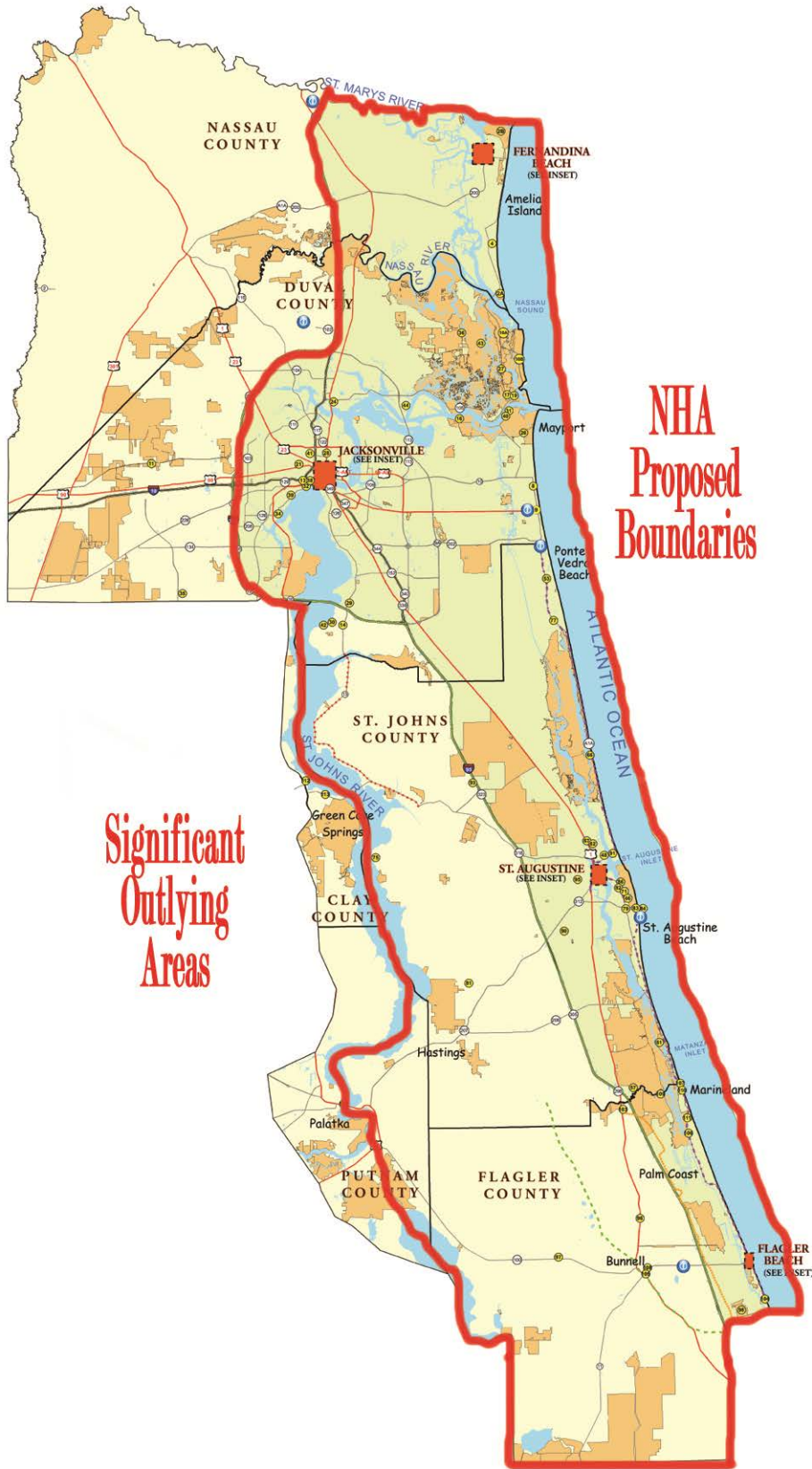
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CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR AND PUBLIC BENEFITS OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Multi-Year, Totally Voluntary, Community Based Initiative

With the development of the 450th Birthday Commemoration of St. Augustine, many people have asked, why only celebrate this unique culture on the national level once every few decades and why is not there a permanent apparatus to celebrate the unique cultural landscape of the entire region? A meeting between the office of U.S. Senator Mel Martinez and the leadership at the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum occurred in early 2007, and thus the idea of a National Heritage Area was born for Northeast Florida. What was originally going to be centered in the St. Augustine area expanded down into Flagler County and upward to Jacksonville and Amelia Island when everyone realized, one cannot tell the story of America's oldest maritime region without talking about the French settlement in Jacksonville FL, that was the impetus for settlement or the unique natural resources of Fernandina Beach and Flagler County, that sustained the region. What started out as an idea discussed in theory by a few people has now turned into a region-wide movement involving historians, historical societies and museums, tourism boards, local governments, natural resource enthusiasts and business groups. The following sections demonstrate the comprehensive approach that this initiative has taken from inception to present.

Benefits of a National Heritage Area

Today, a diverse network of local partners are working together toward the designation of a Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area based on the long-term benefits that this special recognition would offer to the region. Through voluntary participation and local management, and without affecting property rights, some major benefits to residents, visitors, and existing national park units will include the following.

Benefits of National Heritage Area Designation

- A community proscribed, totally voluntary, approach to cultural and natural resource preservation, including potentially conservation, encouragement of tourism and economic regeneration, and without negative impact from excessive regulation and without negative impact on private property rights. If you would like to see legislation regarding America's national heritage areas, you can start at this link: <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/LEG/>
- Encouragement of dialog about shared community values surrounding heritage as a tool for cultural, educational and economic development.
- Creation of regional, reciprocal partnerships to achieve success with locally-led, recreation, natural, education, cultural, arts and tourism projects.

- Encouragement of interdisciplinary and public/private partnerships across the region.
- Management and strategic planning advice along with limited financial assistance for voluntary community projects involving historic, cultural, natural, outdoor, recreational and scenic resources.
- Expanding opportunities for lifelong learning about regional resources by locals and the public, encouragement to get out and explore and learn about what is special in your own area. This is particularly useful for communities like many in Florida with a large population of new residents, or snow birds.
- Increased sustainable heritage tourism and the resulting economic boost.
- Job creation in tourism, preservation, restoration, and education.
- Inclusion in Nation-wide marketing for National Heritage Areas, including the ability to use the National Park Service logo.
- Potential, limited ability to financially assist community projects related to history, heritage, tourism, historic preservation, conservation, natural resource protection, marketing, etc.

Financial Contributions and In-Kind Support

Over \$600,000 of staffing and in-kind support has been provided by the Saint Augustine Lighthouse and Museum between 2007 and 2012. The support has included staffing, travel, office supplies, utilities, office space and professional council from Wexford and Associates, Inc. The Saint Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc. is a private 501c3 not-for-profit corporation with a mission to *“discover, preserve, present and keep alive the stories of the Nation’s Oldest Port, as symbolized by our working St Augustine Lighthouse.”*

Pro-bono legal services are provided to the St. Augustine Lighthouse for licensing and brand protection of the Nation’s Oldest Port logo and brand by Smith Gambrell and Russell of Jacksonville, FL. The resulting benefit is over \$15,000 worth of in-kind services to the museum and this project.

Funding for a Nation’s Oldest Port Heritage Experiences Map was provided by Visit Florida with support from Flagler County Tourist Development Council, Amelia Island, St. Augustine Ponte Vedra on Florida’s Historic Coast, the First Light Maritime Society (a DBA of the St. Augustine Lighthouse) and the University of Florida, Florida Partnership for Water Agriculture and Community Sustainability in Hastings, Visit Jacksonville, Where Florida Begins; The St Johns River Water Management District and the Friends of Agricultural Extension Foundation.

Local Organizations Involved in the Designation Initiative

While numerous organizations have taken part in meetings and given feedback, there are a few that have been instrumental in the process. The First Light Maritime Society which runs the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc. and the Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program has managed the overall effort with input from the volunteer members of the Nation’s Oldest Port National Heritage Area Working Group. A new nonprofit corporation, the Nation’s Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance, Inc., will be created as the first step in developing a local entity that will: (1) manage the designation effort after the completion of this Feasibility Study; (2) prepare the Management Plan after designation; and (3) manage the National Heritage Area after completing and receiving approval of a Management Plan with leadership and support by the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum, Inc. The Alliance will elect interim board members and officers and has adopted interim bylaws. An expanded Introduction and Background of the board of directors and permanent bylaws will be developed following designation.

Other groups that have been instrumental in the overall development of the designation have been the region’s tourism, marketing, and development organizations (Visit Jacksonville, St.. Augustine Ponte Vedra and the Beaches Convention and Visitors Bureau, St. Johns County Tourist Development Council, Amelia Island Tourist Development Council and the Flagler County Tourist Development Council) of the four county region. Florida Agricultural Museum, Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve (GTMNERR), St. Johns County Public Library, and Jacksonville’s Museum of Science and History have provided meeting space. Representatives of the City of Palm Coast Environmental Planning Division, Friends of A1A Scenic

and Historic Byway, GTMNERR, Heritage Crossroads, St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, and St. Johns County Environmental Division – Historic Resources have made presentations to community groups and organizations regarding the local National Heritage Area initiative. Local experts have volunteered their time to author the nationally significant themes of the region. St. Johns River Water Management District and Gannett Fleming, Inc., have obtained and plotted resource data sets for base and proposed boundary maps.

Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area Working Group

- Met regularly since January 2008
- Informal working group open to public participation
- Number of participants varied from 14 to 26 people at individual meetings.
- Many active participants will be integrated into the local coordinating entity currently under formation (Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance), its committees, and ex-officio advisors during this feasibility effort and after designation

St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc.

- Florida nonprofit corporation founded in 1988. The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc. received its 501(c)3 tax-exempt letter from the Internal Revenue Service in 1988, and was previously from 1980 a community service project of the Junior Service League of St. Augustine, Inc, which received its Internal Revenue Service designation in the 1930s.
- Served as coordinator and financial administrator of the Feasibility Study, process and subsequent document.
- Provided and obtained funds and in-kind support for the preparation of this Feasibility Study, supporting materials, and public outreach from individuals; municipalities; counties; corporations; the Friends of Agriculture Foundation; the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and the Beaches Visitor and Convention Bureau; the St. Johns County Cooperative Extension Service; and VISIT FLORIDA.
- To secure necessary input and expert contributions for the Feasibility Study, the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc., reached out to local resource managers, scholars, and tourism and marketing professionals and organizations who prepared sections of the Feasibility Study.
- Reaches out in the Northeast Florida Region to preserve, promote, share and keep alive the maritime heritage and stories of the Nation's Oldest Port region and Florida's First Coast.
- The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc., will continue a coordination role through the Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance, Inc., by providing the leadership and support of a Heritage Area Coordinator, as part of its staff or on contract for the first

five years of the organization's existence. The coordinator will be hired by and work for the SAL&M, but will interface with the Heritage Area Alliance, as organizational liaison.

- The St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc., as the entity that has spearheaded the feasibility study, will participate as a permanent member of the Heritage Area Alliance Executive Committee.

Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance, Inc.

- Being formed to assist with the completion of the feasibility study
- Being established to fulfill requirement in future designation legislation for identification of coordinating entity that will prepare a management plan post-designation.
- To be incorporated as a Florida private nonprofit in the months following designation.
- Structured as a 15 person Board of Directors, all volunteers.
- Has drafted bylaws.
- Is submitting application for tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service
- The Heritage Area Alliance volunteers and in particular its board of directors will help prepare the Management Plan, help develop a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, and will coordinate the Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area . The St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum, Inc. will act as a coordinator and guide for these activities as required.

PREPARATION OF THIS FEASIBILITY STUDY

Program legislation (the National Heritage Partnership Act) is under consideration to standardize the National Heritage Area Program and the criteria for feasibility studies and designations. While there is no formal process or criteria for determining the suitability and feasibility of a National Heritage Area, the National Park Service provides suggested guidelines in the form of critical steps and criteria for becoming a National Heritage Area. These steps follow:

1. Completion of a suitability/feasibility study;
2. Public involvement in the feasibility study
3. Demonstration of widespread public support among heritage area residents for the proposed designation; and
4. Commitment to the proposal from key constituents, which may include governments, industry, and private, non-profit organizations, in addition to area residents.

Our Local Group has achieved all of the above. A number of local scholars have participated in the projects themes, and documented above are many letters of support, meetings and outreach programs that have been held while conducting this study.

The Duval, St. Johns and Flagler County Region exemplifies all of the following criteria helpful in determining an area's eligibility for National Heritage Area status. Our feasibility study documents and analyzes these points.

1. The 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. The area reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folk life that are a valuable part of the national story;
3. The area provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic features;
4. The area provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities;
5. Resources that are 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 that 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.

CHAPTER 10

VISION

The coastal region of northeast Florida is a unique and special place in America. The maritime and multicultural heritage embodied in this landscape's people and resources is unparalleled by other regions of the United States. It is here where Ponce de Leon is reported to have landed in 1513, where the French established first arrived in 1562 and built a short lived settlement along the St. Johns River in modern day Jacksonville in 1564, and where the Spanish established the oldest permanent European settlement of St. Augustine in 1565 to serve its empire in the New World. Despite ensuing battles that have since occurred among Europeans, Native Americans and Americans, St. Augustine, its port and the surrounding region have displayed a remarkable saga of survival and cultural and commercial exchange, much like the character of our nation.

With its defensible harbor, extensive network of inland waterways, and proximity to global shipping routes, St. Augustine was well-suited to become the Nation's Oldest Port and first permanent settlement, thus owes its very existence to the sea. Neighboring communities spanning from Amelia Island to Jacksonville, Ponte Vedra to St. Augustine, and Marineland to Palm Coast and Flagler Beach share in the region's heritage and contribute their individual stories and resources to the mix. The maritime landscape of this 100 mile coastal area has shaped local culture and traditions, and in turn, patterns of human activity have shaped the working landscape. Many of these imprints remain today amidst the area's unique natural beauty. Residents derive a great sense of pride from their region's cultural and natural heritage, and there is increasing awareness of the values of historic preservation, local arts and architecture, local cultural traditions and events, heritage and nature attractions, outdoor recreational opportunities, working waterfronts, and sustainable land uses such as agritourism. As a result of population growth and an influx of newcomers to the area, however, there is a need to nurture local communities' abilities to preserve, celebrate and share their heritage stories and assets. The Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance has prepared this feasibility study which describes how a National Heritage Area designation will assist residents in preserving and enhancing their sense of place and planning for positive change.

The National Heritage Area concept is embraced by this region's stakeholders for its innovative approach to resource stewardship across a large-scale landscape, which encourages collaborative planning and partnerships among the region's multiple communities and diverse citizens. It represents a departure from more traditional federal land and marine designations that involve regulatory boundaries, federal management, and mandatory resource protection. National Heritage Areas instead are voluntary, community-driven initiatives that empower a broad range of local stakeholders to create their own plan for how they will preserve and promote their heritage assets and sense of place. Local coordination is grounded in the principle that the people who are part of the working landscape are closest to its heritage stories and resources, and therefore, are best prepared to guide the activities of the National Heritage Area.

National Heritage Areas use heritage education strategies to foster stewardship and voluntary conservation instead of prescribing regulations and restrictions.

The National Heritage Area approach offers multiple benefits. This designation will increase national and international recognition of this area's significant contributions to American and world history. It will provide the opportunity for northeast Florida—the Nation's Oldest Port region—to have a permanent celebration of its maritime and multicultural heritage. A framework will be developed to support a coordinated, regional approach to cultural and natural resource conservation efforts and heritage tourism initiatives. It will strengthen conservation efforts and support expanded cooperation and communication by inviting broad, regional participation of diverse stakeholders. This cooperation, in turn, will offer a means of connecting related heritage, nature, scenic and recreational resources and stories to the distinctive themes of the overall region, thereby providing visitors with an extensive menu of experiences to hold their attention for an extended time period and encourage additional exploration and repeat visits. The National Heritage Area will create connections among a wide array of local organizations that may not have existed in the absence of a regional approach. It forms a collaborative framework of public and private resources and interests that can be coordinated through voluntary initiatives of a cross-promotional rather than a competitive nature. The heritage area approach also generates new opportunities for public and private funding and technical assistance to support community-driven education, preservation, tourism and economic revitalization goals.

A National Heritage Area can be likened to an “economic enterprise zone” integrated with community-based, voluntary preservation, promotion and interpretation. The National Heritage Area approach is compatible with economic activity because it recognizes the importance of private lands, is non-regulatory, and has no effect on property rights, or land or water use activity. It works through local coordination and a stewardship ethic that puts local citizens, business owners, and community groups in charge of setting their agenda and goals. Limited funding, as well as technical planning and marketing assistance, is available through the National Park Service to assist public and private entities achieve their heritage stewardship and tourism goals. Research indicates that National Heritage Areas are an effective economic stimulator based on enhanced heritage and nature tourism, related jobs, and tax revenues in other National Heritage Areas.

Ultimately, the National Heritage Area concept positions residents, nonprofits, governments, businesses and property owners to work through collaborative partnerships and on shared goals across a large-scale landscape to preserve, interpret, enhance and promote the important cultures, traditions and resources that are a defining part of this American landscape. The strategy is to use heritage as a tool for cultural, educational, and economic development.

Distinctiveness of Theme

America is a maritime nation, and no appreciation of American history is possible without understanding the story of America and the sea. This story begins over two centuries before the birth of our nation, and

over four decades before English settlers landed at Jamestown. The story, which like America itself is both maritime and multicultural, begins with the discovery of La Florida in 1513 by Juan Ponce De Leon. While no one knows definitively where Ponce de Leon landed, here in the Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Region his navigator was known to have taken his northern most reading of 30 degrees 8 minutes.

The coastal region of northeast Florida is a unique and special place in America. The maritime and multicultural heritage embodied in this landscape's people and resources is unparalleled by other regions of the United States. It is here where Ponce de Leon is reported to have landed in 1513, where the French established a short lived settlement along the St. Johns River in 1563?, and where the Spanish established the oldest permanent European settlement of St. Augustine in 1565 to serve its empire in the New World. Despite ensuing battles that have since occurred among Europeans, Native Americans and Americans, St. Augustine, its port and the surrounding region have displayed a remarkable saga of survival and cultural and commercial exchange, much like the character of our nation.

With its defensible harbor, extensive network of inland waterways, and proximity to global shipping routes, St. Augustine was well-suited to become the first permanent European settlement in the present-day United States, and thus owes its very existence to the sea. Neighboring communities span from Amelia Island to Jacksonville, or Jacksonville to Palatka. On the coast they run from Atlantic Beach to Ponte Vedra and from Ponte Vedra to Vilano Beach, along Scenic AIA to St. Augustine and St Augustine Beach and from Marineland to Palm Coast and Flagler Beach. All of these communities share in the region's heritage while adding their individual stories and resources to the mix. ~~heritage has been largely understated.~~ The maritime landscape of this 100 mile coastal area has shaped local culture and traditions, and in turn, patterns of human activity have shaped the working landscape. Many of these imprints remain today amidst the area's unique natural beauty. Residents derive a great sense of pride from their region's cultural and natural heritage, and there is increasing awareness of the values of historic preservation, local arts and architecture, local cultural traditions and events, heritage and nature attractions, outdoor recreational opportunities, working waterfronts, and sustainable land uses such as agritourism. Due to population growth and an influx of newcomers to the area, however, there is a need to nurture local communities' abilities to preserve, celebrate and share their heritage stories and assets. The Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance is pleased to present this feasibility study which describes how a National Heritage Area designation will assist residents preserve their sense of place and plan for change.

2) The National Heritage Area concept is supported by local stakeholders for its innovative approach to resource stewardship across a large-scale landscape, which encourages collaborative planning and preservation among the region's communities and citizens. It represents a departure from more traditional National Park Service models that involve regulatory boundaries, federal management, and mandatory resource protection. National Heritage Areas are community-driven initiatives that empower local citizens to create their own plan for how they will preserve and promote their heritage assets and sense of place.

- With the designation of an NHA for this region, a NHA will provide the opportunity for northeast Florida to have a permanent celebration of its multicultural and maritime

heritage as highlighted throughout this feasibility study. The National Heritage Area concept represents a special designation much different than more traditional national park models.

- Grassroots approach, community-based effort working throughout the region to preserve and promote this special place to all who live here and visit here.
- NHA will be used to highlight the most recognizable resources in the region from major landmarks like the Castillo de San Marcos to the less widely known resources such as the Florida Agricultural Museum - hidden gems in the region.
- Assist with voluntary efforts to preserve and promote the historic, cultural, and natural assets, and the working landscape and waterfronts of northeast Florida.

The mission of the Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area Alliance is to connect people with the historic, cultural, natural, recreational, and scenic assets of the Nation's Oldest Port region through education, promotion and preservation of its unique stories, resources and traditions. To fulfill this charge, the Heritage Area Alliance has researched and developed the concept of a National Heritage Area and prepared a feasibility study for a Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area designation with input and endorsements from a broad base of local stakeholders including residents, scholars, non-profits, local governments and businesses.

The concept of a Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area concept would afford national and international recognition of the region's maritime legacy and multicultural history. It would offer a means of permanent recognition and regional branding.

This feasibility study is the product of a multi-year, community-based effort, a public outreach process, and an assessment of northeast Florida's distinctive maritime and multicultural heritage and the region's contributions to U.S. history. The maritime and multicultural heritage of this country is rooted in what occurred in the port city of St. Augustine, Florida, the Nation's Oldest Port region more than four centuries ago.

Northeast Florida was truly a center of cultural and commercial exchange and a foundation from which the rest of America sprang. This was an area that brought together cultures and commerce from all over the world-- from other areas of the Americas and Caribbean Islands, Europe and Africa via the Atlantic Ocean.

For More Information and to find the full feasibility study, please visit. [About the Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area - St Augustine Light House.](#)

Below, is a portion of the Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area brochure, developed and distributed by the Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Alliance. This portion of the brochure shows the range of themes and lists a sample of regional partners involved in the project since 2007.

NATION'S OLDEST PORTSM HERITAGE EXPERIENCES

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS

Official Florida Welcome Center (T95)
751829 Interstate 95, Yulee, FL 32097
904-255-9182
www.VisitFlorida.com

AIA Visitor Information Center
(at Ocean Publishing)
200 S. Oceanshore Blvd.
Flagler Beach, FL 32136

Amelia Island Visitors Center
(in the historic Train Depot)
102 Centre St., Fernandina Beach, FL 32034
904-277-0717
www.AmeliaIsland.com
www.AmeliaIsland.com/walkingtour

Flagler County Chamber of Commerce
& Visitor Information Center
20 Airport Road, Ste. C, Palm Coast, FL 32164
866.736.9291
www.VisitFlagler.org

Ponte Vedra Beach Chamber of
Commerce & Visitor Information Center
50 A1A North, Ste. 102
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
904-285-2004
www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com

Beaches Visitor & Convention Bureau
10 S. Castillo Dr., St. Augustine, FL 32084
904-825-1000
www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com

St. Augustine Beach Visitor
Information Center
350 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine, FL 32080
904-471-1596
www.FloridasHistoricCoast.com

Visit Jacksonville
208 N. Laura St., Ste. 102,
Jacksonville, FL 32202
904-798-9111
www.VisitJacksonville.com

Downtown Visitor Center
Jacksonville Landing, Ste. 143, lower level,
Jacksonville, FL 32202
904-791-4305
www.VisitJacksonville.com

Beaches Visitor Center
380 Pablo Ave./Beaches Museum & History
Center, Jacksonville Beach, FL 32240
904-242-0024
www.VisitJacksonville.com

Jacksonville International Airport
2400 Yankee Clipper Dr.,
Jacksonville, FL 32218
904-741-3044
www.VisitJacksonville.com

NATION'S OLDEST PORTSM Heritage Area Experiences

Welcome to a journey through the nationally-significant stories of Northeast Florida, a region that has been linked to the sea far longer than the United States has been a country. Residents and visitors can follow their interests along these themed trails and explore the distinctive places that give this maritime landscape its special sense of place. Visit www.floridaha.org for more information and additional places to explore.



MULTICULTURAL COASTAL FRONTIER

When French Protestants established a settlement at the Mouth of the River

Jacksonville, the Native American Timucua had been living there for thousands of years. Three years later in 1565, the French were driven away by the Spanish who reclaimed La Florida and founded St. Augustine. This was the first chapter in a long story of cultural struggle whose Spanish, French, African, English, Scottish, Jewish, Minorcan, Italian, Greek and Cuban imprint can still be seen on this maritime landscape.

NATIVE AMERICAN LIFEWAYS

At the time of European contact, Native Americans had been living in the present coastal region for more than 9,000 years. This area is home to some of the nation's most interesting examples of Native American cultural change. Today, archaeological sites in the region can be visited and the Native American story is told at annual festivals, museums and public parks. Artifacts reflecting native cultures are celebrated, displayed and interpreted throughout the area.

THE OLDEST CITY

St. Augustine was established in 1565 making it the oldest, continuously-occupied European settlement in the continental United States. Its town plan (1596) is listed as a National Historic Landmark and its bayfront offers magnificent views of a waterway used by Spanish conquistadors. Grand hotels with red-tiled roofs grace a city that features the site of Florida's First Lighthouse, the impressive Castillo De San Marcos and the first free African settlement in what is now the U.S.

MILITARY HISTORY

Fought over by European powers, this region has suffered attacks by pirates, sheltered British refugees during the American Revolution, endured the Seminole wars and changed from Confederate port to a Union stronghold during the Civil War. In World War II, the US military trained here and the beaches witnessed the incursion of Nazi saboteurs and the sinking of the Gulf America by a U-boat. Today an active US Naval Base and historic forts, museums, exhibits and sites, testify to its military significance.

TOURISM AND RESORT ERA

Henry Flagler's investment in St. Augustine as a resort destination in the late 1800's established the area as a premier tourism destination. Today, the beauty of the area's maritime environment and an appealing blend of elegant seaside resorts, B&Bs, family-friendly beachfront accommodations, acclaimed golfing, shopping, boating and fishing opportunities create the perfect place for a memorable vacation in one of America's truly unique and historic regions.

TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

For centuries, the Gulf Stream just offshore has carried ships along the trade routes from the Caribbean. Today, the area is home to the Port of Jacksonville — one of the nation's most important. The first road in Florida, the Old Kings Highway, was built in about 1765 to transport naval stores in the south to the Florida/Georgia border. In the 1880's, Henry Flagler brought his steamships and railroad to the area. Today, America's Scenic Highway A1A traverses the region.



COASTAL ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE

The area's rich diversity of architecture and its distinctive blend of craftsmanship and traditions reflect its subtropical setting, multicultural influences and development as a maritime region. European and African traditions, Native American forms of expression and availability of unique coastal materials have combined to create an atmosphere of unique creativity and innovation. From 17th and 18th century coastal fortifications to 19th century lighthouses and the grand hotels, this region's style is nationally distinctive.

UNIQUE NATURAL BEAUTY IN THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

The region contains a diverse assemblage of habitat, animals and plants and public natural areas where natural beauty can be enjoyed. Rare white pelicans nest here as do pink ibis. The rare North Atlantic right whales calve here and fish thrive in the maritime hammocks and floodplain swamps. Public parks and forests, estuarine reserves and conservation areas offer museums, exhibits and recreational opportunities where visitors can learn about and experience local natural resources and stunning vistas.



AGRICULTURAL AND CULINARY HERITAGE

The Nation's Oldest Port culinary experience is unique. The foundations of Florida's agricultural heritage date to the seed stock and animals brought to Florida by Menendez in 1565. Heritage foods and recipes used today harken back to centuries-old practices. Seafood markets, farmers markets, farm stands, restaurants, local producers and vendors and annual festivals connect residents and visitors with the area's unique products and food ways, including local shrimp, oysters, fish, datil peppers, citrus, specialty honeys, heritage cuisine and so much more.

MARITIME HERITAGE

Native American canoes first traversed these waters. Since 1564, merchant ships, privateers, explorers and warships flying the flags of many nations have docked here. Until 1765, no formal roads existed here. Steam ships ran up and down the St. Johns River stopping to unload Victorian tourists. In the modern era, a shrimping and boat building industry thrived here launching Florida's seafood industry. The area's coastal architecture is constructed from products from the sea — coquina (shell rock) and tabby (oyster shells). Aids to navigation have guided mariners yet some 500 shipwrecks resting beneath the area's coastal waters provide a silent tribute to the maritime heritage that for centuries has been the key component of human existence in this special place.

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