Encompassing forty-five communities in North Central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire, Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area (FWNHA) was established by Congress in 2009 to foster a close working relationship between local and regional partners, governmental agencies, and the private sector to preserve the special historic identity of the region.

In accordance with its mandate, Freedom’s Way Heritage Association (FWHA), the heritage area’s coordinating entity, has prepared this management plan to guide the initiatives and activities of the heritage area over the next five to ten years.

The local coordinating entity and its role is central to the concept of the heritage area, envisioned as a partnership of local, regional, state, and national organizations working in tandem to implement a shared agenda for the region. As the coordinating entity, Freedom’s Way Heritage Association is responsible for achieving that outcome and is at the center of the heritage area’s multi-faceted activities.

The management plan outlines how FWHA, working closely with its partners throughout the heritage area, plans to fulfill the vision and mission conceived and expressed in its enabling legislation’s statement of purpose to manage preserve, protect and interpret the heritage areas cultural, historic, and natural resources for the educational and inspirational benefit of future generations. While informing decisions and actions, the plan is designed to allow for adaptation and adjustment as conditions change and new opportunities arise.

Chapter 1 introduces the heritage area’s concept and approach and serves as an executive summary. It provides background on the heritage area’s
establishment, mission, vision, goals, objectives and key interpretive themes. Ensuing chapters outline strategies for how those objectives will be realized through stewardship, planning and resource development, education, communication, collaboration, heritage tourism and interpretation.

The sixth and final chapter is a business plan for the Heritage Area to provide a sustainable roadmap for the actions recommended in the plan.

1.1 CONTEXT

Roughly triangular in shape, Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is a large landscape encompassing 994 square miles (636,160 acres) in area and extending almost 55 miles from metropolitan Boston to its northwest boundary. While its central core is predominately rural in character, the heritage area includes urban and suburban communities with a pattern of land use that becomes predominately less dense as one travels from east to west.

Reflective of its scale, Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is home to a richly textured mosaic of historic, natural and cultural features and sites that reveal the region’s story and its role in the shaping an American identity. Its history can be read through the land and the imprints of human habitation and influence on the region. Throughout much of the heritage area, natural and cultural areas are intimately blended; forests, topography and rivers combine with settlement patterns to create a rich landscape of historic city and town centers, scenic roadways, agricultural ensembles and conservation properties.

Shaped by rivers and their associated valleys and wetlands, Freedom’s Way is a landscape of subtle beauty that has inspired consecutive generations of writers, philosophers, visionaries and experimenters. Within its boundaries is Walden Pond, where Henry David Thoreau lived from 1845 to 1847, considered the birthplace of the American conservation movement. Building upon that legacy, the region includes nearly twenty-five percent permanently protected conservation land (easements, public
and conservation trust ownership) including three national wildlife refuges and twenty-one state parks, forests and other public state-level public recreation areas.

A distinctive and influential force that has shaped the landscape of Freedom’s Way over the past four centuries is its cultural perspective, introduced by early settlers, transformed by generations of descendants, and absorbed and influenced by waves of immigrant populations. Steeped in concepts of individual freedom and responsibility, community cooperation, direct democracy, idealism, and social betterment these perspectives have informed national and international movements in governance, education, abolitionism, social justice, conservation and the arts playing an ongoing role in the evolution of an American identity.

Central organizing elements, both physically and socially within the heritage area, are its forty-five communities which, while independent entities, share the story of the region. Each individual community and place within Freedom’s Way provides a fresh perspective on its history and while the events at Concord and Lexington on April 19, 1775, serve as a touchstone for the region, so too do the less well known stories of the surrounding communities and their responses before and after the American Revolution began.

Today, the increasingly rapid growth of metropolitan Boston out into the suburban and rural landscape presents an ongoing challenge to those committed to preserving community character and sense of place within the heritage area. Increasingly, natural, historic, and cultural resources are being lost and community landscape character imperiled.

The great need is to reverse this trend and build a level of community awareness, recognition, and capacity that encourages and accommodates growth while acknowledging the unique character of individual communities. To achieve this goal, engaging and educating a new generation of stewards is essential.

From early historic villages, to agricultural landscapes of the nineteenth century, to industrial towns, to today’s regenerated forests and expanding
suburbs, the landscape of Freedom’s Way provides a framework through which to reveal its stories.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 National Heritage Areas

National Heritage Areas are places that tell a rich and distinctly American story. Usually managed by a partnership of organizations and local governments with a single coordinating body, they pool resources (cultural, natural, and financial) to promote and conserve the region for the benefit of both present and future residents and visitors.

As of 2015, Congress had designated forty-nine heritage areas, each governed by separate authorizing legislation unique to its resources and desired goals. Recognition signifies a region’s significance to American history and culture and supports interpretation to show how a region’s geography, people, and ways of life have shaped both the immediate vicinity and the nation. The heritage area concept offers a collaborative approach to conservation that does not compromise traditional local use of the landscape and local control. Designation comes with limited financial and technical assistance through the National Park Service.

Although there are many kinds of regional planning efforts across the country, only heritage areas seek to engage residents, governments, and organizations in telling their stories and working in partnership to protect special resources and reach out to the American public. They are grounded in a region’s pride in its history and traditions, and in residents’ involvement in retaining and interpreting the landscape for all. They advance economic development through an appreciation that a region’s unique assets are fundamental to success — asset-based “heritage development” — and by fostering cultural heritage tourism as one aspect of a region’s economy.
The first National Heritage Area was designated in 1984. Today residents and visitors alike are increasingly enthusiastic in discovering the high quality of the experiences they offer. They appeal to all ages and interests. Some have opportunities for walking, hiking, biking, and paddling. Some have festivals to attend and museums to visit. Many provide volunteer opportunities, group tours, and multiple-day excursions and can also be visited in combination with more than eighty units of the National Park Service.

1.2.2 Founding of Freedom’s Way

The impetus for Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area originated in the mid-1990s by local citizens who, concerned about the increasing loss of land and historic sites to unplanned development, sought to develop a collaborative vision for preserving the character of the region. Reaching out to adjacent towns, proponents sought to promote and celebrate regional identity and preserve sense of place.

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association was founded in 1994 and incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The Association began an intensive effort to identify issues of mutual interest to surrounding communities. Convinced the only way to make a positive impact was through a regional approach, Association members sought ways to develop strategies and mechanisms to work together.

With the help of state legislators, the Association obtained a grant through the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (now the Department of Conservation and Recreation) to prepare a feasibility study exploring the potential for implementing a heritage area concept within the region. The feasibility study process took advantage of community interest and contacts developed in the writing of a regional guidebook, A Guide to Nashaway, North Central Massachusetts (Darby et al. 1994).
The Freedom’s Way Heritage Area Feasibility Study (ICON 1997) prepared for the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (now the Department of Conservation and Recreation) inventoried natural and cultural resources, activated public discussion, identified potential interpretive themes and routes, and examined alternatives for organization and presentation of a Freedom’s Way Heritage Area. The heritage area was geographically defined as communities in north-central Massachusetts along the U.S. Route 2 corridor. During the planning process, New Hampshire border towns, with close historical association with the heritage area themes, were added.

Congressional support for designation of a Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area was developed, and the Feasibility Study was reviewed by the National Park Service in 2000. An addendum (2001) addressed newly revised National Heritage Area criteria and was summarized in a 2003 update (Freedom’s Way Heritage Association 2003).

Federal legislation proposing the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area was introduced in Congress in 2001 but, along with other proposed National Heritage Areas, was not brought to fruition until its passage by Congress and signature by President Obama in 2009.

State legislators in Massachusetts worked toward passage of legislation recognizing the heritage area (2006) and legislators in New Hampshire followed (2007).

Before federal designation, Freedom’s Way Heritage Association developed and implemented programs to engage communities, partners, and the public including town tours, lectures, publications, events, and the promotion of events and initiatives of organizations and communities within the region. Partners included historical societies, agricultural interests and regional and local governments.

Among its initiatives was participation in the Heritage Landscapes Program developed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation
and Recreation (DCR) in which twenty-two Massachusetts communities within the heritage area identified 1,658 local heritage and 165 priority landscapes in accordance with criteria developed through DCR’s process.

An enhanced website featuring heritage area themes and communities was brought online by the Association in 2007.

With national designation, Freedom’s Way Heritage Association continued to formalize and enhance programming and promote events and initiatives of participating organizations and communities. Key Freedom’s Way programs have included: Paths of the Patriots; Strollin’ and Rollin’; Farms, Fields and Forests: Stories from the Land; In Thoreau’s Footsteps; The Story of Nahum; Connecting Communities Along Our Trails; Hidden Treasures Weekend; and technical assistance workshops and author presentations.

### 1.3 Freedom’s Way and the National Park Service Call to Action

Throughout the preparation of the management plan Freedom’s Way has aligned its goals to reflect the guiding principles of the National Park Service (NPS) initiative “Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement.” Launched on August 25, 2011, the 95th birthday of the NPS, the Call to Action seeks to integrate the work of individual national parks with programs that support community based conservation and historic preservation in support of a renewed commitment to the stewardship of the nation’s stories and treasured places for the enjoyment of future generations.

The Call to Action includes four overarching themes that are tied to the actions outlined in the management plan. Through communication and collaboration Freedom’s Way will connect people to parks with a special emphasis on broadening the region’s audience and engaging youth and diverse communities with leading-edge technologies and social media;
Through interpretation and education Freedom’s Way will **advance the NPS education mission** by engaging residents and visitors in the region’s stories and providing multiple opportunities to inspire life-long learning that is experiential, based in scholarship, innovative, fully accessible and provides an opportunity to “find yourself” in the place; By enhancing the quality of life within the heritage area through community planning and resource conservation Freedom’s Way will **preserve America’s special places** by promoting landscape conservation that supports healthy ecosystems and cultural resources to preserve community character and sense of place and enhance connections, at every level, throughout the region; By coordinating the work of the heritage area through a sustainable business and implementation plan Freedom’s Way will **enhance professional and organizational excellence** to build a flexible, adaptable organization that encourages innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurship, diversity and leadership.

### 1.3.1 Conceptual Foundation and Approach

Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is a partnership endeavor that recognizes the special identity of the region and works to preserve and enhance the natural and cultural resources that define its sense of place.

As a partnership endeavor, the heritage area’s programs and initiatives will be defined and executed by a broad range of entities within the region with the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association as the coordinating entity. The Association is committed to working with its partners to identify unmet needs and addressing them in accordance with the heritage area’s purpose and mission.
Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will be a catalyst for communication and collaboration among partners – incubating creative partnerships and entrepreneurial endeavors. The Freedom’s Way partnership will promote a place-based identity for the heritage area supporting community interests and the preservation of natural, historic, and cultural resources.

The heritage area has a special relationship with the National Park Service and Minute Man National Historical Park based on the organizational structure defined in the heritage area’s enabling legislation and upon shared interests in historical significance, story, and the mission of identifying and preserving natural and historic resources for the benefit of future generations.

Consistent with the themes identified for interpretation within this plan and in the traditions of social, intellectual and cultural innovation and democratic principles outlined in its content, Freedom’s Way is responsible to the people of the region and the nation to thoughtfully advance its vision. To this end it will be guided by the following mission, vision and goals that have been endorsed by the Board and stakeholders and are based on the work and interests of the heritage area over the past decade. Together they provide a foundation for the purpose, concept and approach behind Freedom’s Way in accordance with the heritage area’s enabling legislation.

1.3.2 Mission, Vision and Goals

The plan’s mission, vision, goals, and guiding principles along with similar content in each individual chapter will shape the activities initiated through the heritage area and serve as a benchmark for evaluation.

The mission, vision, and goals shown in nearby sidebars provide a foundation for the purpose, concept, and approach behind Freedom’s Way in accordance with the heritage area’s enabling legislation.

1.4 THE PLAN

Individual chapters provide insight into how key objectives will be realized by the Association and its partners on behalf of the heritage area.

The Concord River is a designated National Wild and Scenic River along with stretches of the Sudbury and Assabet Rivers, which join at Egg Rock in Concord, MA, to form the Concord River. In December of 2014, Congress passed the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Act, a precursor to federal designation of what may become the heritage area’s second wild and scenic river. Affected sections of the Nashua River are in Massachusetts, including two of its tributaries serving the northwestern parts of Freedom’s Way, the Squannacook and the Nissitissit.

(Photo by Patrice Todisco.)
**Goals**

Four overall goals have been developed for the management plan, representing aspects of the heritage area's principal fields of endeavor. The recommendations of each chapter address these goals and further the heritage area's mission and vision.

**Goal 1.** To foster a culture of stewardship to preserve the natural, historic and cultural resources of the heritage area as a legacy for future generations.

**Goal 2.** To engage and collaborate with organizations, interests and individuals to create a shared regional vision as a living link across landscapes, history and time.

**Goal 3.** To promote sustainable communities throughout the heritage area that reinforce its character and sense of place.

**Goal 4.** To inspire generations of lifelong learners through innovative educational and interpretive initiatives that connect stories – past and present – to residents and national and international visitors.

**Interpretive Themes**

Themes provide an interpretive framework through which to share the region’s stories, connecting communities in a common narrative. Freedom’s Way interpretive framework, outlined in detail in Chapter 2, is outlined in three interpretive themes that have been refined throughout the planning process.

**Theme One: A Mosaic of Subtle Beauty**

An intricate network of rivers, wetlands, lakes, kettle ponds, meadows, forest, drumlins, eskers and monadnocks combined with climate to determine how land was used, inspiring conservation of natural and scenic resources and providing economic and recreational opportunities.

**Theme Two: Inventing the New England Community**

Early settlers established regionally interdependent inland communities distinct from Boston with democratic governments, new institutions, town centers, transportation networks, industries and agricultural practices that defined the region’s identity and sense of place as characteristic of New England.

**Theme Three: Revolutionary Ideas: Visionaries and Experimenters**

Since before the founding of the nation, people within Freedom’s Way Heritage Area have been at the forefront of social, intellectual and cultural innovation; inspired by religious and philosophical convictions, democratic principles, a drive for improvement and rapid industrialization they created new ideas about relationships to society and the natural world.

Providing both a rationale and framework for action, the chapters include strategies on how key objectives will be realized through interpretation and education, communication and collaboration, community planning and resource development, stewardship, heritage tourism and the creation of a sustainable organization tasked with implementing actions recommended in the plan.
Chapter 2: Sharing the Heritage Area’s Stories: Interpretation and Education

Viewing interpretation and education as interconnected activities that provide a comprehensive framework for lifelong learning, the plan for Freedom’s Way provides opportunities for individuals to connect to the region’s stories through its interpretive and education framework.

The plan aligns with goals articulated in the 21st Century National Park Service Interpreter Skills Vision Paper to facilitate meaningful, memorable experiences for diverse audiences that encourage personal connections to the heritage area and its natural and cultural resources. Once established, a shared culture of stewardship will emerge that is relevant, engaging and collaborative. By embracing a pursuit of lifelong learning, the heritage area will nurture global citizens.

The interpretive and educational framework integrates and supports existing interpretation and education sites and programs; connects them to each other and to the landscape; and broadens their presentation into a coordinated regional endeavor that can be experienced heritage area-wide.

As a means to engage residents and visitors of all ages, the plan does not intend to prescribe a methodology that fits all but instead imagines a process that allows for multiple perspectives, illuminating and illuminated by differing points of view. Its goal, to develop lifelong connections between the public and the heritage area advance the mission of the National Park Service’s Call to Action.

History, culture, the environment, civics, and the world of ideas are topics included in the plan, well suited to Freedom’s Way and its principal themes. Initiatives include:

- Creating an interpretive presence throughout the heritage area;
- Implementing a heritage area-wide interpretive presentation that provides orientation and context and promotes existing interpretive
attractions through a range of initiatives including; shared media, thematic tours, developing routes and linkages among partners and recreational interpretive experiences;

- Supporting placed-based programming and life-long learning opportunities; and
- Working with students and teachers through creative educational initiatives that promote engagement with the region’s natural and cultural resources.

Chapter 3: Engaging Participants in Freedom’s Way: Communication & Collaboration

As a partnership endeavor, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will serve as facilitator, host, and guide for the heritage area-wide presentation and activities, responsible for connecting programs and projects within the heritage area in support of its mission and goals. In the broadest sense, the Association serves as the curator for the Freedom’s Way experience – helping to shape all aspects of that experience, through encouraging partners’ involvement, stimulating research, assembling unique elements, and offering its own perspective. To that end the Association has identified the following goals:

- To serve as a catalyst for communication and collaboration;
- To be a positive force for creative partnerships and entrepreneurial endeavors; and
- To promote a place-based identity for the heritage area.

Key to the above is the ability to create a regional presence through “curating” the Freedom’s Way experience. To achieve this outcome the
Association will work closely with its partners to research, record and share both tangible and intangible collections of stories, artifacts and places within the heritage area in a meaningful way by:

- Assessing and updating the heritage area brand and graphic identity;
- Using the Freedom’s Way website and other social media to engage residents, provide information, promote partners, and convey the heritage area’s message;
- Developing an online curatorial initiative to gather, organize, share, promote, link to, and enrich information developed by partners and others;
- Communicating the heritage area vision and tracking progress toward achieving it;
- Building relationships with the wide variety of partners with interest in the heritage area at the federal, state and local level; and
- Coordinating the participation and work of partners, including criteria, guidelines, and standards related to programs to assist partners.

Chapter 4: Stewards of the Heritage Area: Enhancing Quality of Life through Community Planning and Resource Conservation

Using a cultural landscape approach and methodology to enhance the quality of life by supporting and assisting local planning agencies, governments, and nonprofit partners, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will implement a shared vision that promotes a place-based identity, a primary goal of the Association. Within the region there are...
strong, active programs for planning and the stewardship of natural and cultural resources. Freedom’s will connect and integrate those efforts to reach ever higher-levels of achievement.

The Association will align its programs in support of its partners and actively participate in the development and implementation of regional visions and plans as a foundation for enhancing community character to promote place-based identity and sustainability, protect special resources, strengthen local economies and enhance local quality of life. Initiatives will focus on land conservation, historic preservation and regional agriculture and include:

- Using heritage area communications and interpretive and educational programming to raise awareness about landscapes, historic sites and build support for stewardship initiatives, aligning programming with the actions and initiatives of partners;

- Facilitating a network that engages and integrates local preservation, conservation and planning entities; provides educational information and workshops; and encourages them to share experiences and expertise;

- Providing support and technical assistance for stewardship in heritage area towns through a small grants program; and

- Encouraging a cultural landscape approach to historic preservation and resource preservation planning at the town level.
Chapter 5: Attracting Visitors to Freedom’s Way: Cultural Heritage Tourism

As the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area works to establish and promote its identity and brand and to expand audiences for its interpretive and educational programs, it will engage in communications and activities to support heritage tourism across the region. Over time, cultural heritage tourism can have meaningful economic impacts throughout the heritage area.

Cultural heritage tourism initiatives include:

- Facilitating the development of new and enhanced interpretive and visitor experiences throughout the heritage area;
- Developing a collaborative structure to support cultural heritage tourism;
- Marketing and promoting heritage area related programs and events to visitors;
- Assisting partners in measuring the size of their audiences and understanding their needs;
- Conducting visitor research to measure the heritage area’s effects on the region’s cultural heritage tourism; and
- Marketing and promoting the heritage area as a destination in its own right.

Lexington Green is the historic town common of Lexington, MA, today a public park and National Historic Landmark. Here, the opening shots of the American Revolutionary War were fired on April 19, 1775, starting the Battles of Lexington and Concord. The monument at left is one of the nation’s earliest, erected in 1799.

(Photos by Patrice Todisco.)
Chapter 6: A Business and Implementation Plan for Freedom’s Way Heritage Association

Chapter 6, Management and Implementation, serves as a business plan for the heritage area and describes the heritage area’s organization and function describing the actions that the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will take to support the heritage area and to grow as the heritage area itself evolves.

The heritage area’s business plan outlines:

- Measures for effective long-term governance by the Association’s Board of Directors;
- The role of staff in managing the details of the organization’s affairs and day to day work;
- Partnering with local, regional, and state organizations and structuring regional networks;
- Establishment of vigorous relationships with supporters and a fundraising program to build financial stability and the funding and other resources needed to implement the plan;
- Mechanisms for setting priorities, implementation, and maintaining strategic focus; and
- Ways to evaluate progress in implementing the plan.

A Word about Terminology

In this management plan the terms Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area, Freedom’s Way, and heritage area refer to Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area as a whole, including all of its participating partners. When referring specifically to the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association, the terms Freedom’s Way Heritage Association or Association are used.
1.5 Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide the strategies, initiatives, and actions of partners within Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.

**Quality** – Freedom’s Way will strive toward the highest levels of quality possible in its programs, products, and initiatives. It will be a model National Heritage Area worthy of the duties and responsibilities entrusted to it by Congress and the nation.

**Ethical Standards** – Freedom’s Way will maintain the highest ethical standards in its activities and decision-making. Openness and transparency will be constant themes.

**Balanced Perspective** – Heritage area partners will maintain a balanced perspective on every issue, respecting differing points of view, maintaining an atmosphere of civil discourse, and providing room for disagreement.

**Inclusion** – The heritage area will seek to include all peoples and all perspectives within its programming, its initiatives, and its deliberations. Everyone should be made to feel welcome.

---

**Benton MacKaye, Pioneer Regionalist**

American forester, planner, and conservationist Benton MacKaye is closely associated with Shirley Center, MA, roughly at the center of the National Heritage Area. He is perhaps best known as originator of the idea for the Appalachian Trail.

While attending high school in Cambridge, MA, he began charting the landscape around Shirley Center, documenting vegetation, landforms, rivers, and roads in numbered notebooks, later documented in one of his books, *Expedition Nine: A Return to a Region*. Renowned planner and writer Lewis Mumford, a close friend of MacKaye and his future biographer, wrote that “This direct, first-hand education through the senses and feelings, with its deliberate observation of nature in every guise – including the human animal – has nourished MacKaye all his life.”

A 1905 graduate of Harvard University, MacKaye was the first student to graduate from Harvard’s newly established forestry school near Petersham, MA. His important contributions during the early years of national forestry included groundbreaking research on the impacts of forest cover on runoff and stream flow in New Hampshire’s White Mountains. MacKaye’s scientific evidence helped in the creation of the White Mountain National Forest.

MacKaye helped to pioneer the idea of land preservation for recreation and conservation purposes, was a strong advocate of balancing human needs and those of nature, and wrote the first argument against urban sprawl. His call for the construction of the Appalachian Trail was published in the October 1921 issue of *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*.

(Photograph from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benton_MacKaye, which also provided the basis for this text.)
Battle Road Walk, Woburn, MA. This half-mile stretch of the Battle Road is Woburn’s 2015 “Hidden Treasure” (a Freedom’s Way program – see Chapter 2). It remains essentially as 200-plus militia men saw it in the early hours of the morning of the Battle at Lexington.

Under the command of Captain Loammi Baldwin, they assembled at what is now Woburn Common and marched toward Lexington on this road. They were joined along the way by Woburn farmer Sylvanus Wood, who lived nearby. They arrived in Lexington two hours too late to be engaged in that battle. They did proceed, however, to Concord to fight that day. Prior to their march, Asahel Porter, who was not a militiaman, was on his way to market using the same road toward Arlington where he was detained by the British forces and was shot in the back while fleeing. Another one of the casualties of that day, Daniel Thompson, died in battle. (Photo by Darlene Wigton, Woburn Historical Commission.)

**Interests of Partners** – Freedom’s Way will respect the interests and needs of partners, seek to accommodate them, and incorporate them in its programming.

**Local Governance** – Freedom’s Way will respect the interests and decisions of local communities as expressed through citizen input, town meetings, and local leaders. The heritage area will seek to accommodate local interests and needs whenever possible.

**Practical Results** – Freedom’s Way will strive for practical results in its work – real differences in real places, in the communities and landscapes of the heritage area.

**Environmental Sustainability** – In its work with communities, the natural landscape, and natural resources, the heritage area will focus on creating a healthy and sustainable environment through an ecological perspective.

**Best Practices** – Freedom’s Way will seek and encourage best practices in all of its endeavors, relying upon the best advice and most reliable perspectives customized to the needs and interests of the region.

**Vision** – The heritage area will take the long view, focusing on the long term, piecing its initiatives and accomplishments together as a mosaic in accordance with a vision for the future of Freedom’s Way communities.

**Financial Responsibility** – Freedom’s Way will conduct its affairs responsibly, making best use of the resources entrusted to it, working in the best interest of the heritage area with respect for the public good and interests of funders.