

# Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area News

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NHAs celebrate places where natural, cultural, historic, recreational and scenic resources combine to form a nationally significant landscapes arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.

—NPS

## FOUR CRITICAL STEPS

- **Completion of a feasibility study. In progress!**
- **Public involvement in the feasibility study. In progress!**
- **Demonstration of widespread public support among heritage area residents. Growing!**
- **Commitment from key constituents including governments, businesses, and private and non-profit organizations. Growing!**

## NHA THEMES

- Nation's Oldest Port & Oldest City
- Native American Life-ways
- Multi-Cultural Coastal Frontier
- Military History
- Tourism & the Resort Era
- Leisure & Recreation
- Transportation Corridors
- Coastal Arts & Architecture

## Heritage, Nature and Recreation Abounds

The proposed *Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area* is a culturally, historically, and environmentally distinctive region, where numerous chapters in the national story have been written. Throughout centuries, people world-wide have been drawn by the bounteous natural resources of coastal St. Johns and Flagler Counties; thus, today it is a multicultural melting pot.

The present coastal landscape displays historically important buildings, locations, and archaeological sites, many of national significance. Beaches, waterways, islands, and maritime forests still attract people here as they have for thousands of years.



### Kayaking in the proposed National Heritage Area

With the goal of preserving and celebrating these unique heritage assets, as well as creating a more livable and economically viable area, people across this region of coastal Florida are working in partnership with residents, local governments, state and federal agencies, private and nonprofit

sectors, to propose Congressional designation of a *Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area*. As noted in the *St. Augustine Record's* front page article on November 3, 2009, a National Heritage Area (NHA) designation would dovetail easily with the upcoming City of St. Augustine's 450th commemoration celebration and other regional initiatives highlighting our rich, vibrant heritage.

Please email what gives you a special sense of place—stories, resources, historic figures, traditions, events, arts, foodways—to [lwhite@staugustinelighthouse.com](mailto:lwhite@staugustinelighthouse.com).

For information on NHAs: visit [www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/](http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/) and [www.floridanha.com](http://www.floridanha.com).

## Four New and Upcoming Recreational Opportunities within the Proposed NHA

### Historic Wharf Discovered at Longs Landing Estuary

What a Find! During archaeological investigations of *Long's Landing Estuary* site, an environmentally sensitive lands acquisition, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century landing "wharf site" was discovered and since named "Hernandez Landing" after Joseph M. Hernandez. The feature is identified on an 1816 hand-drawn, colored land grant map. The wharf provided water access to readily export cultivated crops (sugar, corn, hemp) to St. Augustine, Savannah and other ports on the

southeastern seaboard. With local archaeologists' assistance,



1816 land grant map of  
Hernandez's Landing

the City of Palm Coast is pursuing a National Register of Historic Places designation.

Park construction is scheduled for 2011 and will feature water-based recreational opportunities and interpretation of natural and historic resources including the Hernandez Landing find. Visit [www.ci.palmcoast.fl.us/Government/Departments/Recreation/Activities.aspx](http://www.ci.palmcoast.fl.us/Government/Departments/Recreation/Activities.aspx) for other offerings such as the Linear Park and St. Joe Walkway facilities, designated as a Great Florida Birding Trail.

Recreational Opportunities,  
continued on Page 2

## Recreational Opportunities (continued from p. 1)

### River to Sea Preserve Enhancements Appeal to Outdoor Recreationists

New picnic pavilions, a gazebo, an information kiosk, additional beach walk-overs, landscaping, sidewalks and a replica of a former coast guard observation tower are among the new public amenities on the east side of the *River to Sea Preserve* celebrated at a recent ribbon cutting.

The Preserve, located on both sides of the A1A at Marineland, is one of five



beach access parks in Flagler County. Bicyclists, rollerbladers, and walkers love the bike path stretching from Marineland at the north county line 19 miles to the Volusia County line in the south.

The bike path starts at the Preserve and glides through a coastal hammock canopy of trees and along the coastline with unobstructed ocean vistas. It also connects to a 37 mile network of additional bike paths. [www.flaglerparks.com/riversea/preserve.htm](http://www.flaglerparks.com/riversea/preserve.htm).

### National Recognition for Washington Oaks Gardens State Park

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection's *Washington Oaks Gardens State Park* was recently listed on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places. The designa-



tion as an Historic District includes the homes, gardens and groves of Louise P. and Owen D. Young, and is only the second district to be listed in Flagler County.

The park is comprised of land that was purchased by Second Seminole War militia General Joseph Hernandez, a Floridian of Minorca descent, in 1818 and was named "Bella Vista."

Visitors can enjoy trails, wildlife viewing, beaches and fishing amidst the beautiful gardens. [www.floridastateparks.org/washingtonoaks](http://www.floridastateparks.org/washingtonoaks).

### Bird Island Park Opening Soon

This Park is located on the A1A in North St. Johns County behind Ponte

Vedra Beach Library.

This new St. Johns County park will be a public/private partnership designed and built using native plants highlighting upland hammock, freshwater marsh, and coastal dune ecosystems of Northeast Florida. The park's boardwalk and pavilion overlook a pond and Bird Island Park rookery, often teeming with migratory birds and wildlife. In *The Players* pavilion, a kiosk introduces visitors to pathways to the sea turtle maze, storytelling and play areas, and other features. Internet access and geo-caching will be available.



Grand opening is slated for February 2010 with hours of operation from 8 am to sunset. Location is 226-5 Solana Road, Ponte Vedra Beach.

[www.birdislandpark.org](http://www.birdislandpark.org).

## Area Happenings

### GTM Research Reserve Teaches Sustainable Living

The Guana Tolomato Matanzas (GTM) National Estuarine Research Reserve has developed a new course entitled "Think Eco-Logically," consisting of 7 classes to help provide current information and trends in eco-friendly lifestyles. Highlights include: sustainable living, water conservation and quality, native plant use, household/hazardous chemical consumption reduction, and making 'green' cleaning products.

Linda Krepp, GTM Research Reserve Educator, will offer the course to homeowner's associations in communities adjacent to reserve boundaries in St. Johns and northern Flagler Counties.

Contact the Reserve's Education Center at (904) 823-4500.

### City of St. Augustine's 450<sup>th</sup> Commemoration Commission

In 2015 St. Augustine will lead the world in the commemoration of its 450th anniversary. On March 30, 2009, President Barack Obama authorized legislation that created the St. Augustine 450th Commemoration Commission. They now have official structure with a city department, strategic plan,

regional steering committee, and federal commission that is taking shape.

A 2 ½ year series of events and opportunities celebrating St. Augustine will kick-off in 2013, beginning when the nation observes the 500th anniversary of Ponce de Leon's exploration of Florida. In St. Augustine the very roots of this nation took hold. Incredibly, when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth in 1620, St. Augustine already had a fort, church, hospital, seminary, fish market and some 120 houses and shops. In a town plan established by royal decree in 1573, the oldest streets in America were laid down. Millions of heritage visitors walk these same streets today. St. Augustine was First America. For information on the speaker series titled "Discover First America: Legacies of La Florida," visit: [www.staugustinegovernment.com/the-city/featured-stories-archive/10\\_09/450thCC.cfm](http://www.staugustinegovernment.com/the-city/featured-stories-archive/10_09/450thCC.cfm).



## Area Happenings (continued from p. 2)

### *Oral Histories for Scenic and Historic A1A Completed*

The heart and soul of the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway program is communicating the grand story of the intrinsic resources located along USA designated Scenic Byways or All American Roads," noted Vickie Renna, author of a National Scenic Byway grant awarded in 2006.

To preserve the flavor of 'Old Florida,' the Friends of A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway began identifying long-time residents along the byway who could offer oral histories about this region.

The A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway extends 72 miles through St. Johns and Flagler counties, rich with historic and scenic resources. According to Byway administrator Sallie O'Hara, "Oral histories provide a great vehicle for preserving these memories, serving as sand prints in time."

The Friends have been assisted by Charlie Philips, historian with Brockington and Associates, Inc., who has prepared 23 oral histories. More are being prepared by Flagler County. Transcripts and audio recordings will be available through the St. Augustine Historical Society Research Library, per Robin Moore, St. Johns County historic resources coordinator. Some oral histories will be used in a Cell Phone Tour project being prepared by the Friends. <http://www.scenic1a.org/>

***Heritage Crossroads: Miles of History***—A designation was awarded by FDOT's Scenic Highway Program to Heritage Crossroads in Flagler County for 92 miles of history. This is the first Heritage Highways designation in the State.

<http://www.flaglerlibrary.org/history/roadways/heritage1.htm>

### *A Taste of Our Heritage*

Who's saving disappearing food traditions and regional food products while helping people discover the joys of eating? This is the mission of Slow Food First Coast, a local non-profit that supports area farms and traditional foodways, and helps Americans reconnect with the people, traditions, plants, soils and waters that produce our



food.

Gary Nabhan, rare foods expert of Renewing America's Food Traditions Alliance, recently visited St. Augustine to research the famed St. Johns County datil pepper. Several years ago, Nabhan nominated the datil pepper for the Slow Food Ark of Taste, a "Hall of Fame" for rare, flavorful regional foods. With the help of Chef Kurt Friese, Slow Food USA Board Member, and Kraig Kraft, an agroecologist, Nabhan is touring North America to get a better sense of how culinary traditions and place-based foods are faring. "Chiles are the world's No. 1 condiment," Friese said. "From a chef's perspective, climate change might have a huge effect on how and what we eat in the future."

While in St. Augustine, the trio visited First Coast Technical College to meet with Chef David Bearl, whose culinary arts department experiments with datils. Bearl and his students are growing thousands of datils and investigating new products to expand the datil market. A local datil pepper product owner, regional farmers, and regional restaurateur provided them with samples to take home a taste of St. Johns County. "St. Johns County has a lot of potential to promote heritage agritourism through its rich farming history, the datil included. Many areas across the country are finding that preserving agricultural lands makes good economic sense and adds to the community's cultural fabric," Nabhan said.

Other heritage foods and dishes will be featured in the future. Contact Richard Villadoniga at [rvilladoniga@yahoo.com](mailto:rvilladoniga@yahoo.com); <http://slowfoodfirstcoast.com/about.html>.

***National Marine Sanctuary Proposed***—SACA is supporting a proposal to either create a new National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) off local shores or to extend an existing Sanctuary from Georgia waters to this northeast Florida area. In December, Dr. George Sedberry, Gray's Reef NMS superintendent, spoke at Whitney Auditorium/Marineland about the federal NMS program, particularly Gray's Reef in the Atlantic Ocean, 20 miles east of Sapelo Island, Georgia, and his experiences with fisheries management issues in the southeastern United States. Contact Marcella Matthaei at 904-471-0750.

## NHA Working Group: Volunteers, Stakeholders and Scholars

American Assoc. of University Women/Flagler County; Anchor Light, Inc.; Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve; GTM National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Advisory Group; Flagler County; Flagler County Historical Society; Flagler Beach Historical Museum, Inc.; Flagler County Tourism Development Council; Florida Agricultural Museum; Florida Depart. of State / Division of Historic Resources; Florida Heritage Book Festival; Florida National Guard, Florida Sea Grant; Friends of A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway; Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area; Heritage Crossroads; Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program; National Park Service; City of Flagler Beach; City of Palm Coast; Town of Marineland; Ponte Vedra Chamber of Commerce; Slow Food First Coast; St. Augustine Archaeological

Association; St. Augustine Attractions Association; St. Augustine Historical Society; St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, Inc.; St. Augustine Port, Waterway and Beach District; St. Augustine Yacht Club; St. Johns County; St. Johns County Board of Realtors; St. Johns County/St. Augustine Builders Assoc.; City of St. Augustine Beach; City of St. Augustine; St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce; St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce—Historic St. Augustine Area Council and South Beaches Business Council; St. Johns River Water Management District; University of Florida; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Matt Armstrong; Denise Bevan; Kristee Booth; Robin Burchfield; Olivia Bush; William Butler; Tom Bledsoe; Troy Blevins; Curt Bowman; Elyse Brady; Jan Brewer; Keith Brown; Brendan Burke; Marsha Chance; Carrienne Churmblo; Kris- sie Cleary; Martin Cleary; Mary Ann Clark;

Michael Cunningham; Dr. Kathleen Deagan; Andy DeLorenzo; Kathy Dvornick; Art Dycke; Beau Falgout; Kathy Fleming; George Gardner; Kathryn Getz; Mark Giblin; Dr. Thomas Graham; Dr. Patricia Griffin; Carl Halbirt; Glenn Hastings; Paul Haydt; Marty Healy; George Hanns; Peggy Heiser; Milissa Holland; Jay Humphreys; Roy Jaeger; Pat Jaeger; Frances Keiser; Hugh Keiser; Barb Kelly; Judith Kent; Leslee Keys; Monica Rowland Kile; Linda Krepp; James E. "Ed" Long; Hester Longstreet; Ryan Mauch; Dr. Maia McGuire; Phil McDaniel; Amy Gilboyl Meide; Chuck Meide; Mollie Malloy; Sacha Martin; Marcella Matthaei; Jane Mealy; Greg Moore; Robin Moore; Caryn Miller; J.B. Miller; Sarah Miller; Christine Newman; Sallie O'Hara; Walter O'Kon; Jose Papa; Dr. Susan Parker; Sandra Parks; Beau Phillips; Bruce Piatek; Fred Pirkle; Teri Pruden; John Regan; Vickie Renna; Tom Rivers; Barbara Roberts; Max Royle; Nancy Russell; Bill Ryan; Nancy Sachs; Andrea Samuels; Bob Samuels; John Seibel; Herschel Shepard; Melissa Sheets; Lenora Silver; Mike Shirley; Paula Sisson; Wil Smith; Dana Ste. Claire; Patsy Stephens; Karen Strandhagen; Lea Stokes; Tim Telfer; Dr. Sam Turner; Ray Tyner; Richard Villadoniga; Leslie White; Catherine Wilson; Michael Wilson; Charles Wolfe; Marilyn Wiles; David Wiles; Oel Wingo; Chrystal Yates; Shelly Young; Janet Zimmerman.

Contact Leslie White, NHA Coordinator, for more information at 765-610-1684 or [lwhite@stauginelighthouse.com](mailto:lwhite@stauginelighthouse.com)



# Nation's Oldest Port Heritage Area

## Nation's Oldest Port NHA Working Group / Join us!

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**You can help — Write a letter of support!  
Visit our Web page at [www.floridanha.com](http://www.floridanha.com).**

### National Heritage Area Public Meeting

We are reaching out to coastal Flagler and St. Johns Counties' stakeholders to form an interim coordinating entity to assist with feasibility study completion. This group will represent varied regional interests and ensure fair and equitable representation of the arts, culture, heritage, nature conservation, recreation, scenic, and tourism initiatives. Contact Leslie White, [lwhite@staugustinelighthouse.com](mailto:lwhite@staugustinelighthouse.com) or 765-610-1684, for more information.

### Benefits of NHA Designation:

- Recognition of the nation's oldest port and surrounding region as a special place in America.
- Support for local celebrations, events and nature, cultural and heritage tourism sustainability.
- Enhanced understanding of the importance of saving our natural and cultural, including historic and archaeological, resources.
- Enhanced regional pride, and national and international awareness.
- Strengthened regional partnerships.
- Improved ability to leverage financial resources through regional cooperation.
- Regional branding assistance from the National Park Service.



## Fore and Aft: NHA Feasibility Study Progress Report

The feasibility effort for the *proposed Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area* is on schedule, thanks to a groundswell of local support. Beginning in 2008 we identified several critical steps ongoing throughout the feasibility process:

- public involvement, outreach and education
- partner and stakeholder collaboration
- demonstrated, widespread public support
- feasibility study development

Due to the response to 9 public meetings and 35 presentations held at locations across the region, partner and stakeholder collaboration has grown. A core group of committed people and organizations has expanded into a diverse, regional working group and more than 400 participants from the public and private sectors.

More than 250 endorsements have been received with more anticipated. Most recently, the Florida Department of State's Division of Historic Resources tendered a support letter. Welcome aboard to all who have written letters or signed resolutions supporting the NHA project. For those who have yet to send a letter, we need yours, too. Your support is vital.

The feasibility study requires intensive preparation. It summarizes the proposed Area's nationally significant themes, identifies known properties related to each theme, evaluates economic potential, identifies a prospective regional coordinating entity, presents a financial plan, and documents public support for the NHA designation.

The focus of 2009 was on the following key elements of the feasibility study:

- creating a framework for the nationally significant themes of the region
- recruiting volunteer scholars to author

individual theme summaries

- collecting and organizing heritage, nature and outdoor recreation data

- coordinating with local and state agency representatives on mapping needs

Currently, we are mid-way through the feasibility process. Next steps include:

- packaging individual themes for expert editorial review
- projecting potentials for enhanced heritage and nature tourism
- researching models for an interim regional coordinating entity

**Special thanks is due to the NHA Working Group for their time and volunteer contributions!**



### Projected Timeline

- 2008 – 2010 Planning and ongoing public outreach with community partners.
- 2008 – 2009 Community input regarding nationally significant local themes and supporting cultural, natural, recreational, scenic and business resources.
- 2008 – 2010 Detailed resource assessment, mapping, and interpretive themes development by local resource managers and scholars.
- 2009 – 2011 Draft feasibility study prepared and presented for public comment.
- 2011—2012 Final feasibility study and draft legislation prepared for submission to the National Park Service and U.S. Congress.