

CHAPTER ONE THE VISION

INTRODUCTION

On October 12, 2006, Congress passed Public Law 109-338, which established the **Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area**, comprising the counties of Río Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos in north-central New Mexico. (See Appendix A for P.L. 109-338.) Heritage Area designation culminated nearly 20 years of community efforts to identify ways to conserve and sustain the area's life ways, languages, folk arts, and sacred spaces, as well as, its architecture and spectacular natural and scenic landscape.

WHERE IS THE NORTHERN RIO GRANDE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA?

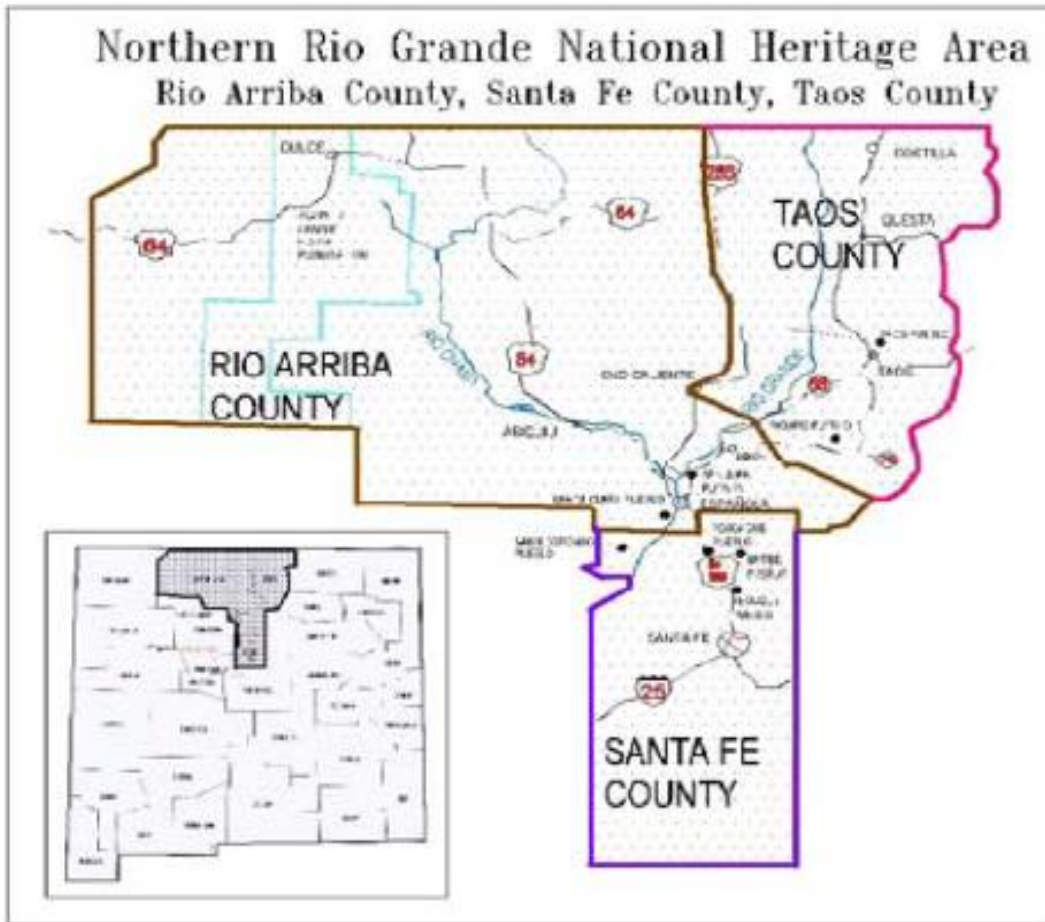
The three-county Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area comprises 10,000 square miles that extend north to south from the Colorado border to the center of New Mexico and east to west between the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan mountain ranges, crossing the Continental Divide in the process. The Heritage Area takes its name from the river that flows through its heart -- the Rio Grande del Norte -- but the area also is strongly defined by its mountains, mesas, and high-desert terrain, as much as by the rivers and streams running through.

The three-county area counts a population of 219,719 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), including eight Indian pueblos: Taos, Picuris, Ohkay Owingeh, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Nambe, Pojoaque, and

Tesuque, most of which occupy the same site, or nearby land, where their 14th and 15th century ancestors lived. Also within the Heritage Area boundary is the Jicarilla Apache Nation, which has headquarters at Dulce, in western Río Arriba County. Native Americans account for 10 percent of the Heritage Area's population, and Hispanics represent another 54 percent.

The history of the Heritage Area region differs from and predates the colonial history and founding of the United States. In the broad Southwest, the states of California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, share a developmental history as part of the Spanish empire and Mexican territory. These lands were ceded to the United States by Mexico as part of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, but it was primarily New Mexico that came into the United States as a conquered land, taken at the start of the Mexican-American War. It is only New Mexico among these states that yet is referenced in other parts of America as being a "foreign land."

New Mexico (especially in the northern region surrounding the Rio Grande) contains the heart of Pueblo settlements, whose histories extend over the past millennium, and those of the earliest Spanish colonists, reaching over the last four centuries. It is perhaps this association with centuries of settlement of different cultures, and entrenchment of the indigenous and Spanish languages and



traditions that have framed the mindset surrounding New Mexico.

RICH IN RESOURCES

The National Heritage Area is rich in cultural resources, which are **explored in detail in Chapter Four**. It is home to 16 National Historic Landmarks and 270 listings on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Heritage Area’s natural and recreational resources are no less vivid. These are **explored in detail in Chapter Three**. About half of the 6.5 million acres comprising the Heritage Area is federal, state, or tribal land. The remaining land, approximately 3 million acres or 4,700 square miles, is in private ownership.

The private land has a population density of 48 persons per square mile. In all, about 64 percent of the population in the three-county area is urban, much of it

concentrated in the City of Santa Fe and the northern portion of Santa Fe County. The remaining 36 percent of the population, or about 80,000 people, live in small farming villages and scattered communities along the Rio Grande and its tributaries.

Water is the starting point, the lifeblood of this semi-arid to arid land where one river, the Rio Grande, occupies center stage. The Rio Grande and one of its major tributaries, the Rio Chama, are part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Heritage Area also counts nine National Scenic Byways. Two national forests cover vast acres in the three-county area, which also is home to a half-dozen Wilderness Areas and two listings on the National Registry of Natural Landmarks. Bandelier National Monument skirts the western edge of the Heritage Area, and Pecos National Historical Park the eastern edge.

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area is dedicated to developing and sustaining the distinct history of north-central New Mexico, which encompasses a mosaic of cultures and settlement patterns spanning 12,000 years. From ancient native cultures to Spanish exploration and colonization, to Mexican independence and American statehood, northern New Mexico's history is complex and intensely interesting.

DIVERSE CULTURES

The combination of cultures, languages, folk arts, customs, and architecture that emerged from these multifaceted interactions continue to shape the Heritage Area today, giving it a flavor all

its own. Eight Pueblos and the Jicarilla Apache Nation are situated here. The area is inhabited, as well, by descendants of Spaniards who settled in the region in 1598 and subsequent centuries, and by Anglos and other cultures arriving in the last 160 years, making northern New Mexico a place like no other.

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area will tell the often turbulent story of these diverse cultures -- of their interactions with the landscape and with each other -- and of the rich traditions that define the area's history and culture. Traditions go to the heart of the Heritage Area. They not only define its past, but provide sustenance, inspiration, and cultural identity for residents today.

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area seeks to strengthen community identity by fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Heritage Area's resources. This will be accomplished by creating connections and partnerships with individuals, tribal and local governments, and communities, to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for northern New Mexico's unique story and to use its important resources to benefit the community.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA?

A National Heritage Area is a place recognized by the United States Congress for its unique contribution to the American experience. In a National Heritage Area, natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human

activity shaped by geography. These patterns make National Heritage Areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and traditions that have evolved in these areas. Continued use by the people whose traditions helped to shape the landscape enhances their significance.

Beginning in 1984, National Heritage Areas were created by Congress as a new vehicle by which a region, through collaboration and partnerships, could conserve and promote its natural, cultural, and historic resources, linking resource conservation, tourism, and economic development. It is important to note the voluntary nature of this initiative, as it does not require, create, or permit any regulatory layers or restrictions on private property. As designated by Congress, each National Heritage Area is governed by separate authorizing legislation and operates under provisions unique to its resources and desired goals.

Creation of a National Heritage Area is primarily an outgrowth of local grass-roots efforts. Local supporters bring a proposed heritage area to the attention of legislators and advocate for its passage while working with the National Park Service to determine whether it meets the designation criteria.

Once the National Heritage Area achieves its designation, a locally controlled **management entity** guides the development of a **management plan**, and then coordinates the many partners in the implementation of the plan's projects and programs.

CREATION OF THE NORTHERN RIO GRANDE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The congressional legislation authorizing the Heritage Area requires the management entity to develop and implement this management plan “**in cooperation with affected communities, tribal and local governments**” and to “**provide for public involvement in the development and implementation of the management plan.**” [**P.L. 109-338, Section 205(a)(2)**]

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area is a reflection of public involvement that took root soon after Congress designated the first National Heritage Areas in 1984. At that time, New Mexicans began to express a desire for greater recognition of the contributions of Native Americans and Spanish colonists in the history of the United States.

Fueling this desire was passage, in 1988, of the *Spanish Colonization Commemorative Act*, which directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study of Spanish frontier and borderlands culture. The 1991 National Park Service study, *Alternative Concepts for Commemorating Spanish Colonization*, identified several alternatives consistent with the establishment of a National Heritage Area.

In 1993, U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici of New Mexico jointly sponsored Senate Bill 294, the *Colonial New Mexico Commemorative Act*, which called for the Secretary of the Interior to formulate a program for the research, interpretation, and preservation of various aspects of colonial New Mexico history.

Although the act did not pass Congress, the idea earned enthusiastic support from the National Park Service.

In 1994, Rio Arriba County opened the Oñate Monument Resource and Visitors Center, to promote the Hispanic heritage of the county and the Española Valley. Four years later, the 400th anniversary of Spanish settlement in New Mexico and the development of a historically inspired plaza in Española furthered discussion for exploring ways to preserve, interpret, and economically sustain northern New Mexico's heritage.

Efforts to create the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area formally began in September 1999 when a general meeting of citizens and representatives from a variety of government entities met in Española to explore possibilities. Follow-up meetings in nine targeted communities in the three-county area followed to explain the heritage area concept and gauge interest. On September 23, 2000, a steering committee, titled the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Committee and comprised of representatives from each county, took shape. The committee negotiated an agreement with the Regents of Northern New Mexico College in Española to serve as its fiscal agent.

The Heritage Area designation was slow in coming. U.S. Sen. Jeff Bingaman twice introduced legislation in the U.S. Congress to create the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area – once in the 107th Congress (2001-2002) and once in the 108th Congress (2003-2004) – but both bills failed. A bill introduced in 2002 by New Mexico Rep. Tom Udall in the House of Representatives also did not pass. It was

not until October 12, 2006, that Congress formally established the National Heritage Area under Public Law 109-338. (See [Appendix C for a detailed history of the Heritage Area.](#))

THE PARTNERS

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area will be managed through a network of cooperation rather than through direct Federal oversight. As the management entity, NRGNHA Inc. will create and sustain partnerships as the best means for local and tribal governments, communities, and organizations to conserve and interpret the natural and cultural resources of north-central New Mexico. (See [Chapter 2 and Appendix G for Partnerships.](#))

PLANNING AND CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Citizen involvement in developing the NRGNHA's vision and goals has been broadly inclusive. The geographic reach of the Heritage Area and the scale of resources warranted a careful and strategic approach to the community process. From November 2007 to October 2009, the planning process involved open houses and formal public meetings, as well as, the more informal process of stakeholder group collaboration and consensus building.

[Appendix C](#) provides a detailed description of the many collaborative efforts undertaken to draw together a community consensus on direction and approach for the Heritage Area. The National Park Service provided a key leadership role and technical assistance in

this effort, along with leading community leaders and representatives of State and local governments. The following descriptions of activities throughout the three-year period demonstrate the degree of collaboration and involvement of various constituents.

2007 Activities and Recommendations:

A stakeholder meeting at the Hacienda Los Luceros in Alcalde on November 2, 2007, drew 50 representatives from federal, state, county, city, and tribal governments, congressional delegations, and the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, as well as, interested parties from non-profit groups, communities, and the news media.

Breakout groups discussed conservation, economic development, and education. Conservation concerns focused not only on important resources such as water, but on taking a sensitive and respectful approach to tourism. Discussion of economic development focused on sustainable agriculture, land uses, youth involvement, heritage tourism, recreation, and fund-raising. Educational priorities centered on heritage activities, such as, supporting festivals and school tours, and taking advantage of existing programs, as in the office of the State Historian.

2008 Activities and Recommendations:

In August 2008, the Heritage Area hired an associate director after the City of Española provided office space in the *Misión Convento* Museum on the plaza. Various organizations donated office equipment, services, and funds.

From the summer of 2008 through the spring of 2009, NRGNHA Inc. made 40 presentations across the three-county region to individuals or groups of potential partners, as well as, organizing formal meetings and open houses. The presentations, which included one to the Jicarilla Apache Nation Tribal Council and one to the Eight Northern Indian Pueblos Council, provided general information about the Heritage Area program and potential opportunities for partnerships.

Gatherings included a public forum in October 2008, held as a special project for members of an environmental science class at Northern New Mexico College. The forum featured planners from Rio Arriba and Santa Fe counties, the City of Santa Fe and Town of Taos. Professors attended, as did staff from NRGNHA, Inc. and the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) of the National Park Service.

Discussion topics influenced NRGNHA, Inc.'s development of preliminary questionnaires on 12 topics of interest ranging from *acequias* to interpretive centers to tourism. The questionnaires were used to facilitate discussion at another workshop in December 2008, and then redesigned and used at six community meetings and three open houses held in 2009. Topics of primary importance on the original questionnaires were pared down to four categories:

- 1. Heritage: Tradition & Continuity.**
- 2. Land Use & Agriculture.**
- 3. Recreation.**
- 4. Tourism.**

2009 Activities and Final Recommendations:

During March 2009, 160 people attended formal workshops in six municipalities (Tierra Amarilla, Glorieta, Taos, Peñasco, Cerrillos, and Agua Fría). **Word clouds** and pie charts, used to confirm the four categories of interest, supported the concept of **Community Development** as the unifying approach to the categories of interest.

Word Clouds were generated by an on-line computer program that portrays words and phrases in different colors and sizes of type according to the number of times they occur. The more often a word or phrase is used, the larger the type. The resulting “cloud” of words and phrases conveys graphically the relative importance of topics and concepts of concern. (<http://www.wordle.net>) (See [Appendices I and J for Word Cloud Charts.](#))

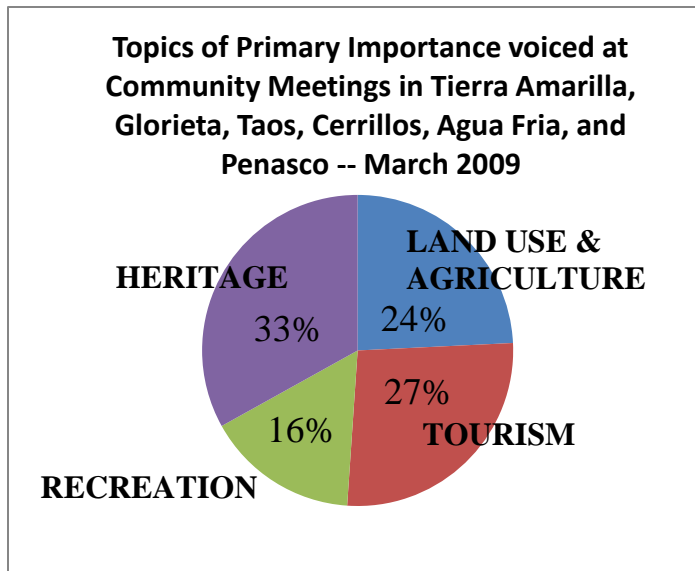
In May 2009, the RTCA staff facilitated three open houses, one in each county. Input from the 110 community members in attendance was gathered through one-on-one conversations and comments written on flip-charts, stickers, and questionnaires. The questionnaires also were published on

the NRGNHA, Inc., website and distributed by community members.

On June 9, 2009, in a meeting facilitated by RTCA staff, the Board of Directors ranked project categories in order of priority as a first step toward a detailed procedure to implement the Heritage Area Management Plan. Ideas were grouped under one of six categories: Heritage; Land Use and Agriculture; Recreation; Tourism; Community Development; and Miscellaneous. Board members added a

seventh category: Youth involvement. Each board member then suggested up to five projects thought to be appropriate for the Heritage Area to pursue.

Organizational meetings culminated with a stakeholder workshop at the Oñate Center on October 30, 2009.



In break-out groups, about 60 representatives of federal, state, county, city, tribal, non-profit, and local stakeholder organizations discussed topics important to their organizations, and generated project ideas to address their interests and concerns (See [Appendix D](#)). Stakeholders also completed a survey stating the kinds of stories their organization sought to tell, how they told them, and to whom they told them. Stakeholders were asked to state ways in which the NRGNHA, Inc., could be used by them, their organization and/or others.

In the end, more than 20 years of cooperation in forming the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area paved the way for continued future collaboration.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area has been described as uniquely different from other National Heritage Areas because of the great number of tribal entities and lands within its borders. The NRGNHA enabling legislation (P.L. 109-338, Section 205 (a)(2) specifies: *“The management entity shall develop and implement the management plan in cooperation with affected communities, tribal and local governments and shall provide for public involvement in the development and implementation of the management plan.”*

In accordance with our bylaws, the NRGNHA, Inc. Board of Directors includes representation from each of the eight northern pueblos that are situated within the Heritage Area borders, including the Nambé, Ohkay Owingeh, Picurís, Pojoaque, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Taos, and Tesuque pueblos, and from the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Tribes were consulted in the development of this management plan, and tribal members were included in the review.

NRGNHA management has made special efforts to include tribal representatives as active members of the Board, and there has been active solicitation of tribal participation at the Board meetings. In the last year, Board meetings have been held at different Pueblo facilities to create goodwill and to demonstrate the desire to collaborate. Tribal entities have received

grants as part of the NRGNHA, Inc. grants program, with funding provided for a Tribal farming project, a Tewa language documentation project, a youth hiking project at Puyé cliffs, and a Tribal cultural heritage website development project.

To further the inclusion of the pueblos and Jicarilla in the efforts of the National Heritage Area, a Tribal outreach initiative is being defined under the direction of Tribal representatives who are members of the Board and the Executive Director. This initiative will result in creation of a Tribal Involvement Plan that will guide and support the efforts of the NRGNHA, Inc. by soliciting input and appropriate consultation with Heritage Area tribal entities.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area Management Plan qualifies for Categorical Exclusion 3.3 R under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA). There are no extraordinary circumstances that may cause a significant environmental effect.

Categorical Exclusions under NEPA and National Park Service Director's Order #12, *Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-making*, apply to listed actions that have no potential for measurable effects to the human environment. As it applies to the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area Management Plan, Categorical Exclusion 3.3 R is for the “adoption or approval of surveys, studies, reports, plans and similar documents which will result in recommendations or proposed

actions which would cause no or only minimal environmental impacts.”

Actions categorically excluded under NEPA and Director's Order #12 must still be reviewed for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Therefore, a copy of the draft Management Plan was presented to the State Historic Preservation Officer, who concurred in a finding of No Historic Properties Affected. The concurrence letter from the State Historic Preservation Officer is included in [Appendix M](#).

Given that the Management Plan for Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area does not propose the construction of new facilities such as parking lots or visitor centers, and given that the focus of the Management Plan is on interpretation of the region’s history, its importance and environment, there will be no impacts to stream flows or associated wetlands. Therefore, no consultation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is planned.



Río Grande at Española

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area management plan presents a comprehensive strategy for future management and protection of the heritage area's natural and historic resources and cultural traditions.

MISSION AND VISION

The **mission** of the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area is to sustain the communities, heritages, languages, cultures, traditions, and environment of Northern New Mexico through partnerships, interpretation, and education.

Partnerships are created and enhanced through the shared vision of respecting, protecting, conserving, and celebrating the landscape and the historical, social, and cultural characteristics of the Indian, Hispanic, and other communities of Río Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos counties.

Our **vision** is community and economic viability rooted in the heritage and the environment of Northern New Mexico.

The vision for the heritage area is supported by broad goals adopted by the Heritage Area governing Board. These goals in turn frame the developmental direction and activity that will shape the formation of the Heritage Area.

GOALS

The following goals were derived from the community planning and consultation described above. The goals target broad **objectives** that are linked to the mission and vision of the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area:

- To build understanding and identity, raising local, regional, and national awareness of the Northern Rio Grande region;
- To strengthen the fabric and sustainability of the place through education and promotional activities;
- To increase the community collaboration and involvement within communities that constitute the heritage area; and
- To expand economic opportunities while supporting a healthy ecosystem and enhancing natural resource-based recreation opportunities.

Each goal statement addresses a different aspect of the developmental efforts and strategies being undertaken in implementing the Heritage Area.

Goal 1: Enhance understanding and awareness of the heritage area's stories and resources by strengthening community identity, creating opportunities for interpretation and visitor education, and by supporting heritage programs.

Goal 2: Sustain traditions, heritage, and culture by supporting community efforts to maintain traditional life practices, by documenting stories and histories, and by supporting preservation of cultural resources, including local arts, traditions, and celebrations.

Goal 3: Involve youth in the appreciation of and continuation of traditional practices by creating opportunities for hands-on experiential learning, internships, and mentoring.

Goal 4: Create partnerships with non-profit groups, local and Tribal governments, service organizations, educational institutions and others to further the goals of the NRGNHA.

Goal 5: Conserve resources by working with communities and preservation organizations and by supporting efforts to maintain, preserve and restore natural and cultural resources, while also providing opportunities for recreation.

Goal 6: Promote economic development and heritage tourism by gathering and sharing information on the Heritage Area and establishing partnerships with communities, businesses, and organizations that provide tourist experiences and programs.

(Goals and objectives are further defined in Chapter 6.)

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are the overarching stories of national importance that the Heritage Area would like to tell. These themes are an organizing framework that provide context for the interpretation of individual resources. The Heritage Area has identified three key themes:

Theme 1 – Cradle of Settlement: The history of the Heritage Area is one of migration and settlement, with each wave of settlers bringing its own elements of culture. The stories are about the people.

Theme 2 - Adaptation and Survival: The demands of the land, climate, and geography and isolation from other centers of habitation force adaptation and unity with the demanding environment to permit long term survival.

Theme 3 – Identity Through a Cultural Blend: The region’s identity evokes the mingling of cultures. The specific interplay of land, water, and people over an extended time defines the heritage of this special place.

(Interpretive Themes are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.)

IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

The success of the Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area requires an organizational culture and style that is enterprising, entrepreneurial, and results-oriented, while its vision will be sustained and enhanced by respecting, protecting, conserving, and celebrating the landscape and the historical, social, and cultural characteristics of the Indian, Hispanic, Anglo and other communities of the area.

The Management Plan is staged to support implementation of strategies over the next 10 to 15 years. Strategies and approaches are presented within five-year increments to facilitate measurement and ongoing evaluation of accomplishments.

(See Chapter 6 for discussion of implementation.)