



National Heritage Areas Program
Frequently Asked Questions
Authority to Receive Heritage Partnership Program Funding

Information provided below addresses questions about National Heritage Areas' (NHA) funding authorities granted by law and specifically addresses the relationship between the National Park Service (NPS) and an NHA, should an NHA's authority to receive Heritage Partnership Program (HPP) funding lapse or reach its funding authorization limit. While the federal funding authorization may end, the designation of the NHA continues in perpetuity.

General

How long is an NHA authorized to receive HPP funding under the NHA Program?

The Secretary of the Interior is typically authorized to provide HPP funding to an NHA for up to 15 years via the NHA's designating legislation. Congress can extend this authority through subsequent legislative action. As of September 2021, there are three NHAs for which there is no time limit on their funding authorization time limit: Shenandoah Valley Battlefield National Historic District, Cane River National Heritage Area, and Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area.

Have any NHAs been authorized to receive federal funding beyond the initial authorization and funding cap limit?

Yes, Congress has extended dates for funding authority. However, there have also been times when funding authorizations have lapsed, causing NHAs to experience periods of no HPP funding authority.

Congress has also increased authorized appropriation limits, referred to as caps or ceilings. If an NHA reaches the appropriation ceiling mid-fiscal year, it receives federal funding up to that limit.

Have any designated national heritage areas permanently lost their authority to receive HPP funds?

Since the program's inception, only one NHA has not been reauthorized by Congress to continue receiving HPP funds. Congress did not reauthorize funding for Southwestern Pennsylvania, known as Path of Progress Heritage Route. Its Federal Commission was not extended, and the NHA is no longer active. Additionally, John H Chafee Blackstone River Valley NHC currently receives federal funding from a different funding source through an agreement with Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park.

Who can extend the authorization and increase the appropriation limit/funding cap?

Only Congress can extend the authorization for federal funding or appropriation funding cap.

Is an NHA, whose funding authority to receive HPP funds has expired, eligible to receive HPP funds under a Continuing Resolution?

It depends on Congressional language in the Continuing Resolution (language extending the authority of the Secretary to provide assistance and/or the funding authorization date for the NHA would be required) and NPS budgetary processes under a Continuing Resolution.

Federal Commissions

Do all NHAs have a Federal Commission?

No. The designating legislation for some NHAs establishes a Federal Commission as the local coordinating entity. For others, the local coordinating entity is a state or local government, university, or non-profit organization. If a Federal Commission is created, it is given an authorized time limit, initially up to 5 years, to develop a management plan and coordinate local partnerships. A Federal Commission's full responsibilities are outlined in the NHA's designating legislation.

What happens when a designated National Heritage Area's Federal Commission's authority ends?

Congress can extend the authority of the Federal Commission or designate another local coordinating entity to continue work under the NHA's management plan, as well as to receive HPP funding.

Financial Assistance

What will happen to existing HPP funding and open cooperative agreements between the NPS and an NHA if the authority to receive new federal funding ends or the funding cap is reached?

The NPS would continue to administer open cooperative agreements and close them out as work is completed. The NPS would still be substantially involved in open cooperative agreements and provide administrative and technical assistance to an NHA as needed to complete the scope of work via an agreed upon workplan/budget.

Can an NHA receive other NPS funding?

Yes. An NHA can apply for funding under other competitive NPS grants programs' authorities and eligibility rules. This applies to an NHA whether it is authorized to receive HPP funding or not. Other funding opportunities can be found at www.grants.gov.

What other sources of funding are available to NHAs?

The NPS encourages NHAs as public-private partnerships to utilize the NHA designation to facilitate sustainable funding from state, local, and private sources, as well as federal grants.

Technical Assistance

Would the NPS continue to provide technical assistance to an NHA that lost its authority to receive HPP funding?

As NHA designation is in perpetuity, the NHA Program provides technical assistance to all NHAs, when requested, and continues to engage NHAs as partners in preservation, conservation, recreation, and education efforts through information sharing, networking, and best practices.

Can an NHA continue to work with NPS park partners or other NPS programs if it does not have HPP funding?

Yes. An NHA may partner with park units and/or NPS programs on projects and programs under other authorities and agreements.

September 2021. This FAQ is subject to change and will be updated, as needed.