

KEY THEMES

Three primary interpretive themes representing the important cultural and natural resources in the region were identified during the study: (1) the "Making of Nations" theme emphasizes the immense strategic importance of Lake

Champlain and its connecting waterways during past military actions; (2) the "Corridor of Commerce" theme focuses on the critical importance of transportation on the lakes and rivers in the development of industry; and (3) the "Magnet for

Tourism" theme encompasses the valley's long history of tourism and its diverse vacation areas. The "Making of Nations" theme is considered to be of outstanding national importance and to merit recognition.

THE STUDY AREA

The extent of the so-called "Champlain Valley" is open to question. For example, it may be defined legitimately as encompassing the towns that abut the historic waterway, the valley floor, or the drainage basin of the lake. For the purposes of this project, the team restricted the study area to the counties in New York and Vermont where the majority of resources embodying the major interpretive theme "Making of Nations" are located—Clinton, Essex, Warren, Saratoga, and Washington Counties in New York and Grand Isle, Franklin, Chittenden,

Addison, and Rutland Counties in Vermont. The waterway—composed of Lake Champlain, the Champlain Canal, Lake George and the upper Hudson River—forms the spine of the study area.

During the course of the study, the team discovered that thematically related resources exist in the Richelieu Valley in Québec. These related resources, located in four Regional Municipal Counties or MRCs (*Municipalités régionales de comté*)—Le Bas-Richelieu, La Vallée-du-Richelieu, Rouville, and Le Haut-Richelieu—are

described in the study. Given the common history and themes, there is potential for international collaboration across the U.S./Canadian boundary.

It is important to note that the study area chosen by the team should not be considered a recommended "boundary" for any of the heritage preservation options described in the report. The actual "boundary" (if any) of a heritage corridor or other option would be determined during the legislative process, should legislation be pursued.

HERITAGE PRESERVATION OPTIONS

In consultation with regional and community representatives, the National Park Service developed three options that could be pursued to better recognize, promote and preserve the region's important cultural and natural resources: designation as a national heritage corridor; a quadricentennial commemoration of Samuel de Champlain's arrival in the region; and designation of a state/provincial heritage corridor. All three options provide opportunities for cross-boundary collaboration, and they need not be mutually exclusive. The study also includes a "continuation of current practices" option; under this scenario existing entities would continue (and possibly expand) their efforts to preserve and enhance heritage resources, and no federal designation or additional authority for federal involvement would be pursued.

National Heritage Corridor:

One option is federal designation as a national heritage corridor, which recognizes areas where natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources combine to form cohesive and distinctive landscapes arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. There are three broad purposes of designating a national heritage corridor: (1) to enhance and preserve cultural landscapes and historic sites; (2) to improve historical understanding and heritage appreciation; and (3) to stimulate community and economic development. There would be no power of eminent domain – the corridor would not become public land – and no new land use restrictions would be imposed through the designation. Financial and technical support would be available through the NPS. Successful management would hinge upon the creation of partnerships among individuals, community organizations, businesses, government agencies (local, state/provincial, and federal), and others with an interest in the corridor.

Quadricentennial Commemoration:

A second option is federal support of efforts to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Samuel de Champlain's arrival in the Champlain/Richelieu region. Two major celebrations have been held in the Champlain Valley to commemorate Champlain's arrival: the first, in 1909, marked the 300th anniversary of his arrival in what is now the United States; the second, in 1959, highlighted the 350th anniversary. The 400th anniversary commemoration would be modeled after these earlier celebrations, but could be expanded into a multi-year event and linked with related activities in Quebec. Federal legislation would authorize a coordinating entity—in all likelihood a public/private partnership with representation from key interests in the region—to prepare, secure funding for, and execute a plan to commemorate Champlain's arrival and explore its implications.

State/Provincial Heritage Corridor:

A third approach, state/provincial designation of a heritage corridor, also would benefit the Champlain Valley, but without the recognition and direct involvement of the NPS. This option, modeled after the St. Croix International Waterway and Commission in Maine and New Brunswick, would be formalized through parallel legislation to create a heritage corridor adopted by the governments of New York, Vermont, and Quebec. The binational cooperation could begin with a Memorandum of Understanding between the parties and then be based on legislation. Federal involvement in the region would continue to be through existing competitive grant and technical assistance programs. Unlike the first and second options, this approach would not require legislative action by the U.S. Congress.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE COMPLETE NPS REPORT, PLEASE CONTACT:

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The full report is also available on-line at www.nps.gov/boso/Planning.htm/Champreport and at local libraries throughout the study area.

PLEASE SEND WRITTEN COMMENTS ON THE NPS REPORT TO:

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COMMENT DEADLINE:
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