

Santa Fe National Historic Trail

Final Strategic Plan

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National Trails System Office
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Santa Fe National Historic Trail Strategic Plan

BACKGROUND

The Santa Fe Trail Association (SFTA), in partnership with the National Trails System-Intermountain Region of the National Park Service (NPS), developed this Strategic Plan to chart a course for future protection and interpretation of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail (NHT).

This Strategic Plan addresses purpose and vision, visitor experience goals, a range of recommended actions, and future steps to be taken to implement the plan.

Officers, directors, and chapter presidents of the SFTA met with NPS staff in a workshop on March 21, 2003, in Trinidad, Colorado, to address the future of the organization, partnership, and the NHT. The edited results of that workshop were presented in a *draft* Strategic Plan dated July 1, 2003. Review and incorporation of comments occurred during summer 2003. This *final* Strategic Plan was prepared after final review and discussion during an SFTA board meeting, September 24, 2003, in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed yearly to monitor progress and achievements, and to review priorities. It is expected to provide guidance for the SFTA and the NPS in the future protection and interpretation of the Santa Fe NHT for the next 10 years.

PURPOSE AND VISION

The purpose statement summarizes the reasons why the SFTA was established, and reflects the national organization's trail-wide goals. The NPS, which is the lead federal agency administering the NHT in partnership with the SFTA, has a vision statement reflecting its trail-wide goals.

Purpose of the Santa Fe Trail Association:

- To preserve, protect, educate, and promote the public awareness of the Santa Fe Trail

Vision of the National Trails System-Intermountain Region

- With our partners, we provide leadership for the use and protection of a diverse collection of national historic trails [including the Santa Fe NHT] and Route 66 – their people, stories, places, values and legacies.



Huston Tavern, Missouri.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

Visitor experience goals identify the important qualities of a visit to the Santa Fe NHT. These goals are seen as general descriptions of what people will see, do, and feel as they visit the trail in the future.

Question:

“What do we want trail visitors to see, do, and feel when they visit our trail? In other words, what will visitors experience on the ideal trail in the future?”

- Visitors will experience a sense of place along the trail; and they will see and feel the trail’s history.
- Visitors will be stimulated by activities and resources along the trail, creating interesting, and excitement about, seeing and learning more.
- The Santa Fe Trail story will be interpreted (i.e., be fully researched, be placed in context, and be site-specific) trail-wide to promote visitor understanding and appreciation.
- All age groups will find appealing activities and resources along the trail.
- Monumental sculptures will be added those already existing to capture people’s attention and stir their imaginations.
- Visitors will be able to take short, established trail walks, and be able to ride along the actual trail in a manner that does not destroy the trail resource.
- Through interpretation related to each historic site along the trail, visitors will experience what an original trail traveler may have felt at that site.
- Visitors will be able to experience historic sites, structures, and ruts associated with the Santa Fe Trail.
- Visitors will be able to develop awareness of the historic trail through marketing and accurate orientation, signing, and marking.
- Visitors will be able to access a range of resources (e.g., printed materials, maps, Internet, audio/visual programs) to enable them plan a trail visit that meets their needs in terms of level of interest and time limitations.
- Students and teachers of all ages will easily find a range of appropriate and accurate education materials to use on and off the trail.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The SFTA and the NPS, working with their partners, will undertake the following actions to meet the desired visitor experience goals and to fulfill their stated purposes.

Question:

“How do we get from where we are (current trail conditions) to where we want to be – in 5 years and in 10 years?”

MARKETING

- Undertake a coordinated marketing strategy to promote the trail locally, regionally, and nationwide.
 - Involve local chambers of commerce;
 - Solicit strong local input to ensure accuracy of information;
 - Emphasize local stories for newspapers, magazines, and Internet;
 - Develop a coordinated series of maps, brochures, kiosks, and calendar of events ;
 - Develop and install consistent signage;
 - Develop promotion materials using DVD technology;
 - Strengthen existing trail speakers’ bureau;
 - Seek corporate partnerships; and
 - Develop themes for the marketing strategy, such as “Help us preserve our heritage,” or “Help us educate the youth of America.”

- Conduct surveys of visitors at selected sites along the NHT, and develop data to determine visitor backgrounds, interests, and needs. Develop a visitor profile and strategies on how to attract them to trail events and activities.

- Actively promote trail activities and events in local and regional news media; generate press releases, sponsor travel writers, and arrange interviews with knowledgeable trail people.

- Develop and conduct a campaign to increase membership in the Santa Fe Trail Association; encourage local businesses to join the association.

- Sponsor press release workshops at trail symposiums.

- Develop a video on the Santa Fe Trail (20 minutes long, e.g., “Saving a Legacy” by the Oregon California Trails Association) for airing on local television stations and showing during events, meetings, and other gatherings.

INFORMATION

- Develop site-specific brochures emphasizing local trail attractions and activities.

- Develop a series of information and interpretive kiosks along the length of the trail.
- Develop detailed driving guides for local and regional areas, highlighting historic sites and interpretive opportunities.



Durham Ruts, Kansas.

INTERPRETATION / EDUCATION

- Sponsor an innovative, informational, and educational website; feature chapters and events as well as trail-wide elements.
- Translate trail-related materials (i.e., audio/visual and publications) into Spanish.
- Initiate a partnership program with schools along the trail to develop educational programs, materials, and activities:
 - Develop and coordinate field trips, information packets, speakers, and traveling trunks; and
 - Sponsor teacher training workshops on trail history and resources.
- Continue to sponsor and expand the current speakers' bureau.
- Develop a strong geo-cache program to encourage visitation to trail sites.

- Encourage chapters to develop tours with knowledgeable guides to trail sites in their areas; promote tours through presentations to schools and special interest groups.
- Encourage each chapter to designate one person as a contact for education or civic programs.



Boggsville, Colorado.

RESOURCES

- Continue an aggressive program of mapping and identifying trail-related resources; develop a trail-wide database.
- Develop relationships with receptive landowners and SFTA members along the trail to protect historic sites from resource threats.
 - Focus on liability issues;
 - Arrange for special visitation times (e.g., twice a year); and
 - Organize a special recognition for landowners actively involved with resource protection (e.g., Partners for Protection).
- Provide facilities or clean-up services for trail-related sites; utilize the services of people performing community service work.
- Emphasize the need to respect private property in all interpretive and educational materials.

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- Support efforts to learn from private landowners, as well as to educate them about trail-related resources.
- Complete a survey of resources/ruts/segments.
- Encourage each chapter to designate a functioning preservation officer.

OTHER

- Update the Santa Fe NHT Comprehensive Management Plan, with SFTA as planning partner.



Swales near Fort Union National Monument, New Mexico.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

Undertaking some changes in the SFTA's organization and operation would assist with its ability to meet its goals, to support the actions described above, and to work in partnership with federal agencies, special interest groups, and individuals.

Question:

“Now that we know where we want to go and what we have to do to get there – how can we get the association, its chapters, and the NPS to implement the Strategic Plan?”

- A staff position should be established to function as an SFTA operational arm. Priorities for such a position would be:
 - Grant writing;
 - Fund raising;
 - Identifying additional dimensions for the SFTA; and
 - Coordinating an Internet site between the NPS and SFTA.
- There is a concern about the apparent lack of effective communication and coordination between the chapters and the national association. To address this issue:
 - Commit to improve communication between chapters and the national association.
 - Accept responsibility for passing minutes from board meetings to chapter presidents, and on to chapter members.
 - Recruit directors and officers at both the local and national levels.
 - Sponsor chapter presidents' breakfasts.
 - Meet twice during scheduled board meetings. This would allow time to introduce concerns, and time to think and meet again to discuss “solutions.” Add a “chapter reports and concerns” to the agenda for the SFTA board of directors' meetings.
 - Develop a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities. If an action or activity pertains to the organization as a whole, the national association should be held responsible. If an action or activity pertains to the chapter or local area, the chapters will accept responsibility for implementation.
 - Promote unity among chapters, and between chapters and the national association.

A more effective organization and partnership would accept and respect the following roles and responsibilities:

SFTA / National

- Encourage the creation of publications.
- Promote trail-wide publicity.
- Develop workshops and education (for teachers).
- Foster membership growth.
- Develop overall strategic and financial planning.
- Support chapters in their efforts to promote and protect the trail in their local areas.
- Continue to support trail-related research.
- Encourage trail-wide events.
- Remain active in planning and implementing symposiums and rendezvous.
- Cooperate actively with the Partnership for the National Trails System.
- Continue to provide information, guidance, and a physical presence at meetings.
- Commit to communicate more effectively with the NPS, and to support the Santa Fe NHT.

SFTA / Chapters

- Inventory trail resources; marking sites, segments, and road intercepts.
- Map the trail.
- Deepen educational involvement.
- Develop relationships with businesses, corporations, and landowners.
- Provide on-the-ground preservation, with support from the national association, NPS, and others.
- Develop relationships with other chapters.
- Promote membership growth.
- Plan and hold symposiums.
- Provide local on-site knowledge and labor force.
- Support the national organization in decisions and efforts.

NPS

- Administer the NHT.
- Support the SFTA.
- Manage appropriations and Challenge Cost Share Program.
- Support preservation partnering.
- Administer the site-certification program.
- Push for NPS sites along the NHT to support the SFTA in their programming, education, and interpretation.
- Provide technical assistance, including interpretive skills and resources.

PRIORITIES

The highest priority recommended actions for the next five years are:

MARKETING

- Undertake a coordinated marketing strategy to promote the trail locally, regionally and nationwide. (See details, p. 6.)

INFORMATION

- Develop a series of information and interpretive kiosks along the length of the trail.

INTERPRETATION / EDUCATION

- Initiate a partnership program with schools along the trail to develop educational programs, materials, and activities. (See details, pp. 7-8.)

RESOURCES

- Continue an aggressive program of mapping and identifying trail-related resources; develop a trail-wide database.

The above four actions, with all associated activities, will receive the highest level of attention from the SFTA national and chapters, as well as the NPS. These actions will be revisited yearly to assess progress. All other recommended actions will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, as time, interest, or funding allows, over the 10-year life of this plan. Priorities may change as the SFTA and the NPS revisit this plan yearly.

The highest priority implementation steps for the next five years are:

SFTA / National and Chapters

- Develop, fund, and hire for an operations position.
- Conduct joint annual planning with NPS (comprehensive, including appropriations).

NPS

- Strengthen partnering through cooperative agreements.
- Revisit the Santa Fe NHT Comprehensive Management Plan with SFTA as planning partner.

The remaining implementation steps will be addressed as time and interest allow over the 10-year life of this plan. Priorities may change as the SFTA and the NPS revisit this plan yearly.

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