

## MEDIA ALERT

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### FIVE COMMITTEES ORGANIZED TO ASSIST WITH HERITAGE AREA PLANNING PROCESS

**HARRISONVILLE, Missouri** – Recognizing the importance of regional ownership and participation, five committees have been formed to help organizers and consultants set priorities and define the procedures for long-term decision-making in Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. The five committees – Tourism Marketing, Interpretation & Education, Resource/ Communication, Heritage Development, and Civic Engagement – provide a focused process for community contribution and individual input into creation of the region's general management plan. The plan serves as a 10-year guide to help citizens and organizations in the 41-county region protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage and develop the National Heritage Area.

The U.S. Congress designated Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area on September 29, 2006 as one of 10 new National Heritage Areas; there are currently 38 designated regions across the nation. Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area – comprising the 41-county region of Eastern Kansas and Western Missouri – is recognized for its distinctive history, culture, and landscape that tell the stories about the quest for national and individual freedoms.

"We've held a series of informational meetings about our unique assets and nationally-significant stories for almost a decade. Now that our Heritage Area designation is official, we want to encourage as many citizens as possible to help us set a defined course for the region's growth and sustainability," Judy Billings, executive director of the heritage area's management entity, said. "These committees provide forums for respectful discussion and collaboration. The outcomes and recommendations of these committees will help Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area create a pro-active plan for the future based on our collective heritage."

Membership on the committees is open to any person currently residing or working in National Heritage area region. The committees will meet periodically over the next 11 months to define and shape the priorities and decision-making processes for implementation over the next decade. Each committee will oversee the creation of a particular component of the management plan. The consulting team hired to oversee production of the management plan will facilitate the committee process. At least one member of Freedom's Frontier Heritage Area Steering Committee will serve as advisor to each of the five planning committees.

"The future of Eastern Kansas and Western Missouri depends on local citizens championing the values and celebrating the assets of our region," Billings said. "We must share all the significant stories that have helped shape our country and communities, foster understanding and insight among current and future generations, and build collaborations that will strengthen the economic vitality of the region."

Enacted by a bill signed by the President, National Heritage Areas are living landscapes recognized through a partnership with the National Park Service. One of the first requirements of designation is the creation of a general management plan. Generated through an open process for civic engagement, the management plan outlines the vision for the Heritage Area region and the mission, along with key goals and objectives, of its management entity. Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area is currently engaged in its management planning process, led by a consulting team comprised of national and local experts. The final plan is scheduled for submission to the National Park Service in February 2009.

*For more information about Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, the five committees and the management planning process, e-mail [info@freedomfrontier.org](mailto:info@freedomfrontier.org) or call 888.529.5267*

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