



RURAL HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE ARKANSAS DELTA

Update – Spring/Summer 2007

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NEWS FROM THE FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

Arkansas Delta RHDI Transitions into Product and Program Development in Year Two of National Pilot Program

The Arkansas Delta Rural Heritage Development Initiative (RHDI) has kicked off the second year of our pilot program with a bang! We have had successes in the state legislature, active involvement in our programmatic taskforces, significant media coverage, and continue to be invited to join larger efforts and partnerships working towards the revitalization of the Arkansas Delta.

The Arkansas Delta RHDI executive committee visited our sister program, the Central Kentucky Heartland RHDI, in March to observe the challenges and issues faced by their rural region. The Kentucky pilot program has had many successes to date, and it was great to see their small towns and rural landscapes – very different from the Delta! We will return the favor next year when the Kentucky folks visit the Arkansas Delta to observe our region.

Our second year (of three) workplan focuses on tangible products and visible program development. Early efforts include the successful launch of the new regional image and brand, **Arkansas Delta: Soil and Soul**, with a Delta-wide media blitz in early May. A heritage-focused map and updated Arkansas



AR RHDI staff and partners tour Abraham Lincoln sites in the KY RHDI region



Liz Smith of the Blytheville-Gosnell Area Chamber of Commerce (and an active RHDI taskforce volunteer!) unveils the new regional brand to a full house at the Kress Building in downtown Blytheville.

Delta Byways brochure debut this month, as well as the redesigned and visitor-friendly www.deltabyways.com. For those interested and involved within the Arkansas Delta, check out the new www.arkansasdelta.org for all the insider information and up-to-date goings on of the RHDI and our partners.

It is hard to keep up with the many ongoing preservation projects in the 15-county Arkansas Delta. We continue to assist and add new bricks-and-mortar projects to the workplan. Individuals and organizations contact the RHDI daily to inquire about services offered and to join our regional efforts towards preservation and revitalization of the Arkansas Delta and its unique and distinctive historic, cultural and natural heritage.

Don't miss the Arkansas Delta RHDI introductory video – view online at www.nationaltrust.org/rural_heritage/videos/arkansas_small.mov or contact Beth for a copy, 870.816-0774 or elizabeth_wiedower@nthp.org.

REMEMBER - Collaboration is key to the continued success of the Rural Heritage Development Initiative. Please feel free to pass these Updates on to interested parties and organizations, or provide Beth a list of contacts to add to our growing network of supporters and partners.

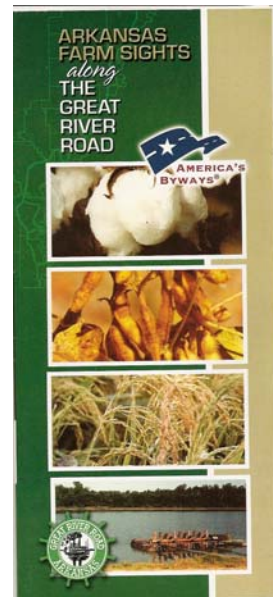
PROGRAMMING

HERITAGE TOURISM

The Heritage Trails taskforce has finished its preliminary research and planning for the Arkansas Delta Music Trail and has turned over the project to production professionals to implement the project. The enhanced CD/DVD project will guide residents and visitors alike through the Arkansas Delta highlighting our rich musical heritage through songs and interviews with local artists and musicians. The CD includes tracks from bluesman Robert Lockwood, Jr. to Johnny Cash to gospel great Al Green, among many others.

This one-of-a-kind product will be available for sale online and in retail stores throughout the Delta in early Fall 2007 – just in time for the *Arkansas Blues and Heritage Festival* (formerly the King Biscuit Blues Festival) in Helena. Start planning your backroads driving tour of the music heritage of the Arkansas Delta now!

The Heritage Trails taskforce of the RHDI shifts its focus now to the creation and development of an African-American Heritage Trail in the 15-county region. **Join us for the next scheduled Heritage Trails taskforce meeting on June 27th in Helena, 10:00 am at the Delta Cultural Center's Delta Eagle Room.** Call or email Beth for more information or if you have questions, elizabeth_wiedower@nthp.org or 870.816.0774. All RHDI taskforce meetings are open to the public and we welcome all volunteers and interested parties – make sure your community is represented.



Finally, pick up a copy of the new **Arkansas Farm Sights along the Great River Road** brochure. This new addition, designed and printed by *Arkansas Delta Byways*, is a primer for those who have just entered the Delta and a good refresher for those of us who live here!

LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



CALL FOR LOCAL AND UNIQUE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

The top priority of the RHDI in Year Two is the creation and promotion of a **DeltaMade branding program** to recognize and increase the sales of those unique products and services produced here in the region.

As such, the RHDI is actively seeking local talents, products, and services to be included in the DeltaMade branding and promotional program. This will be a great opportunity to generate knowledge and increase visibility of the distinctive “homegrown” products and services in the Arkansas Delta. Examples of potential DeltaMade range from Shadden’s BBQ Sauce (Marvell) to Carson’s Candles (Marianna) to

Miller’s Mud Mill pottery (Dumas). Many of these treasures are hidden, so keep your eyes open for more of these great DeltaMade products and contact Beth to add to the growing list at elizabeth_wiedower@nthp.org.

The Local Business Development taskforce will meet on June 28th in Stuttgart at the Phillips Community College campus at 10:00 am. Agenda items include finalizing the guidelines and criteria for the Arkansas DeltaMade program as well as selecting the initial participants and products to be included in the pilot period. Taskforce meetings are open to all individuals and organizations interested in the implementation of the Arkansas DeltaMade branding and promotional program. Hope to see you there!

A big thank you to the *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis’ Little Rock branch* for coordinating and hosting the recent “**Growing Your Business in the Growing Delta**” workshop focusing on gaining access to capital in the Arkansas Delta. Held in Brinkley, the workshop explored how small business lending can increase a bank’s bottom line and what is really driving economic development in the region. The RHDI hopes to partner with the Federal Reserve Bank to offer similar opportunities this year in other areas of the Arkansas Delta aimed at bankers, financial institutions and alternative lenders.

IMAGING & BRANDING



WOW! What an incredible response we had to the unveiling of the new regional brand and image – **Arkansas Delta: Soil & Soil!** In addition to great turnout at the multiple press events in Helena, West Memphis and Blytheville, we garnered impressive coverage in both local and statewide newspapers, including a front page article in the Arkansas Section of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*.

Main Street Helena members present the new regional image at a press conference in May.

Communities and organizations across the region are adopting the image and adding all or parts of it to their publications, logos, websites, signage, etc. As more and more join the effort, we continue to “connect the dots” up and down the region and begin defining the Arkansas Delta as a distinct destination with a unique and significant heritage. Related to the new image and brand is the design and publication of several new brochures and maps directing visitors throughout the Delta and highlighting the hidden treasures of our natural and cultural landscape. Look for new materials to debut this summer and check out two new websites, www.arkansasdeltabyways.com and www.arkansasdelta.org.



PRESERVATION EDUCATION

Unfortunately, the efforts of the **Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas** to secure a statewide historic rehabilitation tax credit were not successful during the 2007 state legislative session. However, with the support of the **Arkansas Historic Preservation Program**, the **Department of Arkansas Heritage** and the **National Trust for Historic Preservation**, the bill has been referred to “interim study” and the Alliance plans to campaign hard in the months to come to gather support among the executive and legislative branches of state government. To learn how you can help, contact Chad Blackwell with the Alliance at chadblackwell@preservearkansas.org or check out their website at www.preservearkansa.com.

The 2007 legislative session did result in a huge success for the Arkansas Delta’s economy as Representative Robert Moore’s (D-Arkansas City, Desha County) bill, the **Delta Geotourism Act of 2007**, passed and was signed by Governor Mike Beebe this spring. Providing a 25% income tax credit to individuals and entities that invest at least \$25,000 in geotourism-supporting businesses, the bill aims to encourage private-sector development that would attract and accommodate out-of-state visitors to Arkansas’ lower Mississippi River Delta region. To qualify for the tax credit, the business must sustain or enhance the area’s geographical character — its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents — while developing facilities or services that would attract or support the attraction of geotourists.

A 2002 study by National Geographic Traveler magazine and the Travel Industry Association of America found that at least 55 million American adults could be classified as geotourists, travelers who seek places where they can interact with the natural features, heritage and culture of a location while simultaneously protecting and improving the very places they visit. Geotourism-supporting businesses would include heritage, recreational or entertainment centers, sporting goods retail or rental stores, indoor or outdoor plays or music venues, bed and breakfasts, guide services, arts and antique shops historic sites and restaurants. The Delta Geotourism Act received overwhelming support, winning unanimous approval in the Senate and only one dissenting vote in the House of Representatives.

Thanks to co-sponsors in the RHDI region - David Rainey, D-Dumas, Nancy Duffy Blount, D-Marianna, David Dunn, D-Forrest City, Clark Hall, D-Marvell, Allen Maxwell, D-Monticello, and of course, Robert Moore, D-Arkansas City.

LANDMARK PRESERVATION

There has been major progress in the preservation and rehabilitation of some of the Arkansas Delta's landmark structures. Mississippi County is home to several with movement proceeding on the creation of the Delta Gateway Museum to be housed in the historic Kress Building on Main Street in downtown Blytheville. Just blocks away, restoration work is underway on the exterior of the Greyhound Bus Station as we get a step closer to opening the city's official visitors' center. And great news from Dyess – the city has purchased the Dyess Colony Administration Building and has received emergency intervention funds from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's (NTHP) Southwest Office to begin stabilization of this incredible structure. Plans for reuse include housing city offices, the Dyess Public Library and a museum dedicated to the interpretation of both the Dyess Colony and its most famous resident, Johnny Cash.



Dr. Ruth Hawkins and Mayor Larry Sims check out the Dyess Colony Administration Building shortly after the city purchased the building. Reuse plans include moving City Hall into the rehabilitated structure and developing a museum, visitors center and archive.



The NTHP's Southwest Office was also critical to the preservation of the Pickens Baptist Church structure on the grounds of the Desha County Museum in Dumas. Knocked off its foundation and damaged by the February 24th tornado that ravaged the town, the church building has been lifted and placed on new piers and repairs have begun. The structure is one of several locations in Dumas with plans to be developed as the Arkansas Gospel Institute and a key site on the RHDI's Arkansas Delta Music Trail for its association with the rich gospel music heritage in the Delta.



Other ongoing preservation projects include private endeavors on Cherry Street in Helena where a commercial storefront is being rehabbed as a dental office with upper floor residential lofts, and on Main Street in Brinkley where the historic Brinkley Opera House is undergoing conversion to multiple retail storefronts with a live performance venue above.

Preservation Architect Tommy Jameson visits with Main Street Dumas director Marilyn Bradshaw and National Trust AR Advisor Debbie Shea about the damage to Pickens Baptist Church by the February tornado that hit Dumas.

OPPORTUNITIES & INFORMATION

2007 Preserve America matching-grant program

The Preserve America matching-grant program provides funding to designated Preserve America Communities to support preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education and historic preservation planning. Through these grants project we, as a country, gain a greater shared knowledge about the Nation's past, strengthened regional identities and local pride, increased local participation in preserving the country's cultural and natural heritage assets, and support for the economic vitality of our communities. In 2006, forty-five grants were awarded in the first round and twenty-three in the second round.

Deadline: June 29, 2007

For more information: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/index.htm>

Call for Nominations - The Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians seeks nominations for the *Best of the South: Preserving Southern Architecture Award*.

This award, in its second year, will honor a project that preserves or restores an historic building, or complex of buildings, in an outstanding manner and that demonstrates excellence in research, technique, and documentation.

Projects in the twelve-state (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) region of SESA and that were completed in 2005 or 2006 are eligible. Nominations should consist of no more than two typed pages of description, and be accompanied by hard copy illustrations and any supporting material. A cover letter should identify the owner of the project, the use of the building(s), and the names of all the major participants of the project. Send four copies to Andy Chandler, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, 8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC 29223. Questions: 803-896-6179 or chandler@scdah.state.sc.us. **Deadline is June 30, 2007.**

Mapping Arkansas Communities: An Introduction to GIS & Community Analysis

July 12 & 13, 2007 (Note: Workshops are only one day. Choose which one day to attend.)

8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Complete Computing, Inc. One City Center, 400 West 7th Street Little Rock, AR 72201

Audience: Beginners & anyone interested in mapping their community. Participants will learn to use ArcGIS 9.2.

To register, <http://www.urban-research.info/ur/workshops/register.aspx?c=Little%20Rock,%20AR>

Do you know the best places to buy an old house? – The Arkansas Delta, of course!

This Old House magazine is putting together their first-ever list of "The Best Places to Buy an Old House" for an upcoming issue. They're especially interested in places where the momentum for preservation is just getting started or where there's an established preservation nonprofit that can provide guidance and information on preservation resources, or financial and tax incentives for those willing to restore endangered or neglected areas.

If you'd like to nominate a place, send the following information to Keith Pandolfi at keith_pandolfi@timeinc.com no later than June 8th, 2007: the name of the neighborhood, town or district; a brief history of the area; a brief description of the types of houses available, including architectural styles, the period in which they were built; and their estimated cost; a short paragraph on why you think the area deserves to be included; any information on your organization, or any other preservation organizations in the area is helpful, as are photos, or Web links, and information on tax or financial incentives.

National Endowment for the Humanities Planning Grant

Planning grants can be used to plan, refine, and develop the content and interpretive approach of programs that reach broad audiences, including exhibitions, interpretation at historic sites and houses, reading and discussion programs, Web-based or other digital projects, or other public programs that encourage discussion, analysis, and reflection in the humanities.

Applicants should have already conducted preliminary consultation with scholars to help shape the humanities content of the project and with other programming advisers appropriate to the project's format.

NEH encourages complex projects that reach exceptionally large audiences in any of the following ways:

- Creating collaborations among institutions, especially non-traditional partners, to expand the project's scope and reach. Projects that take advantage of statewide or regional associations (e.g., library networks, museum associations, state humanities councils, etc.) to reach broadly are welcome.
- Envisioning diverse and wide-ranging program formats that expand or deepen the audience's engagement with the humanities by extending the project's scope to larger audiences or engaging the same audience in different ways. Conducting programming at large number of venues across the nation.
- Devising a Chairman's Special Award exhibition. These are traveling, large-scale exhibitions of national visibility that would have exceptional potential for attracting large numbers of visitors. These exhibitions should show unusual promise in terms of disseminating important ideas in the humanities in ways that would be broadly appealing to the public. They should also include a strong companion Web site or other creative digital component that significantly enhances the humanities content of the project or improves its dissemination to audiences.

http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/AHCO_PlanningGuidelines.html

EPA Region 6 Brownfields Program

Main Street Argenta (North Little Rock) is in the process of facilitating a brownfields grant a project in downtown North Little Rock. As a number of our Main Street programs in the Delta own properties that could very well be brownfields, this may be something those programs should investigate.

As part of the U.S. EPA's initiative to reuse and revitalize contaminated property, the Brownfields Program provides funds and technical assistance to states, communities and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together to prevent, assess, safely cleanup, and sustainably reuse brownfields. This resource provides information on the U.S. EPA's Brownfields Program, including the Brownfields Revitalization Act, grants, technical tools and resources, as well as information on Brownfields projects across the country.

Since the Brownfields Program inception in 1996, Region 6 grantees have been awarded more than \$38 million in brownfields competitive grants. Region 6 is proud to report that over 700 sites have been assessed, 10,600 jobs created, and \$2.3 billion leveraged in redevelopment.

The Region 6 Superfund Program serves Louisiana, **Arkansas**, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas and 65 Tribes.

Resource: <http://epa.gov/region6/6sf/bfpages/sbfhome.htm>

NEW! – Follow this link to the online training calendars of the **Arkansas Small Business Development Centers**. Delta locations include Jonesboro and McGehee, with other opportunities in Little Rock and Pine Bluff. Please pass on to any small business owners and entrepreneurs in your respective communities.

<http://asbdc.ualr.edu/training/>

Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) program of the Rural Housing Service (RHS)

The Rural Housing Service (RHS) announces that it is soliciting applications under its Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) program. The HPG program is a grant program which provides qualified public agencies, private nonprofit organizations, and other eligible entities grant funds to assist very low- and low-income homeowners in repairing and rehabilitating their homes in rural areas. In addition, the HPG program assists rental property owners and cooperative housing complexes in repairing and rehabilitating their units if they agree to make such units available to low- and very low-income persons. This action is taken to comply with Agency regulations found in 7 CFR part 1944, subpart N, which require the Agency to announce the opening and closing dates for receipt of preapplications for HPG funds from eligible applicants. **Closing date for applications: June 18, 2007**

<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do?mode=VIEW&oppId=1359>

HISTORIC HOME RESTORATION GRANT – American Heritage Home Trust

American Heritage Home Trust offers a grant of five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for the rehabilitation of an historic home in the United States. The recipient project must be owned by a non-profit or government entity and exemplify the mission of the Trust. Please read application carefully. All requirements must be met.

The organization's mission is to:

- ◆ Identify and rescue houses of historic, cultural or architectural importance in the United States
- ◆ Repair and preserve these properties for future generations
- ◆ Promote education of, and appreciation for, American history through cultural tourism

Applications must be postmarked by **August 15, 2007** and sent to AHHT, 2221 Water Street SW, Olympia WA 98501-2857.

E-mail ahhtorg@yahoo.com or phone (360) 754-1455 or (410) 258-9805

Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG), USDA

[Available Funds Posted December 8, 2006](#)

Application for Federal Assistance: [SF-424](#); [SF-424a](#); and [SF-424b](#)

Regulations: [4284g.pdf](#); [4284g.txt](#)

Purpose

The purpose is to promote sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs. This is accomplished by making grants to pay costs of providing economic planning for rural communities, technical assistance for rural businesses, or training for rural entrepreneurs or economic development officials.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) applicants must be a public body, **nonprofit corporation**, Indian tribe, or cooperative with members that are primarily rural residents. You must have significant expertise in the activities you propose to carry out with the grant funds and financial strength to ensure you can accomplish the objectives of the proposed grant. You must be able to show that the funding will result in economic development of a rural area (which is defined as any area other than a city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants and the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such a cities or towns). Your project must include a basis for determining the success or failure of the project and assessing its impact.

Selection Process

Projects eligible for RBOG funding compete based on certain grant selection criteria. Priority points are awarded to those projects that best meet these criteria and are ranked from the highest to the lowest scoring. The criteria includes the sustainability and quality of the economic activity expected; the amount of leveraging of other funds; economic conditions in the service area, and the project's usefulness as a new best practice. Applications are funded up to the maximum dollars that are available in any given funding cycle.

REMINDERS

2007 Preserve America Community designation application

Communities may apply for special designation as a *Preserve America Community*, which recognizes communities that:

- protect and celebrate their heritage;
- use their historic assets for economic development and community revitalization; and
- encourage people to experience and appreciate local historic resources through education and heritage tourism programs.

Deadline: Four application and designation cycles occur each year. The 2007 application deadlines are March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1.

For more information: <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/communities-form.pdf>

Interpreting America's Historic Places Grants

www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/historicplaces.html

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) offers Consultation Grants and Planning Grants to support public humanities programs that use one or more historic sites to interpret important topics in American history.

Donated Technology Products Available for NonProfits at TechSoup

www.techsoup.org/stock/rci

If your nonprofit organization needs more computers but your budget is tight -- TechSoup Stock has a solution. At TechSoup Stock, hundreds of donated computers and software are available from participating partners. Administrative fees are a low percentage of retail value, and no membership is required.

The Recycled Computer Initiative (RCI) Program - Our pioneering Recycled Computer Initiative gives nonprofits nationwide a chance to get high-quality refurbished computer systems at a discount. The first nationwide refurbishing program geared strictly to nonprofits, RCI also provides an environmentally friendly alternative to used equipment disposal.

National Endowment for the Humanities grant opportunities:

www.neh.gov

Description

Consultation grants for Interpreting America's Historic Places help organizations initiate new interpretive programs and enhance existing interpretation at places of historic significance.

About Interpreting America's Historic Places Consultation grants are being offered as part of the Interpreting America's Historic Places program, which supports humanities programs that exploit the evocative power of historic places to address themes and issues central to American history and culture. Projects may interpret a single historic site or house, a series of sites, an entire neighborhood, a town or community, or a larger geographical region. The place as a whole must be significant to American history, and the project must convey its historical importance to visitors. The goals of the program are to: * enhance lifelong learning in American history by connecting nationally significant events, people, ideas, stories and traditions with specific places; * foster the development of interpretive programs for the public that address central events, themes and issues in American history; and * encourage consultation with humanities scholars and history organizations in the development of heritage tourism destinations.

The Rural Heritage Development Initiative (RHDI) is a three-year pilot program of preservation-based economic development in the 15-county Arkansas Delta region. Focusing on heritage tourism, local business development, preservation education, landmark preservation, and imaging & branding, the RHDI is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Partners in the RHDI are Main Street Arkansas, Arkansas Delta Byways and the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas, as well as the Main Street programs of Blytheville, Dumas, Helena, Osceola and West Memphis.

For more information, or to receive future RHDI Arkansas Delta Updates, please contact:

Beth Wiedower, RHDI Arkansas Delta Field Representative,
141 Cherry Street, Helena, Arkansas 72342
870.816.0774 elizabeth_wiedower@nthp.org

