National Historic Trails

National Historic Trails have historic significance and can only be designated by an act of Congress. There are currently nineteen in the United States. The Old Spanish Trail was designated in 2002 as the nation's 15th National Historic Trail. In 1829, Antonio Armijo led the first mule caravan which opened trade between New Mexico and California. The mule caravans became an annual tradition falling out of favor after 1848.

In 1968, the National Trails System Act opened the door to federal involvement with various types of trails including historic trails. Today, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) along with the National Park Service (NPS) and the National Forest Service (NFS) are responsible for the administration and management of National Historic Trails that cross agency lands.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to highlight for decision makers the various opportunities for improving public awareness and increasing the recreational value of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT) across northern Arizona and southern Utah. This is not a decisional document but rather a guiding document to help motivate future efforts that sign, interpret and utilize trail resources. Due to a lack of BLM grant funding associated with this Cooperative Agreement, workshops were not held to gather additional public or agency input regarding this proposed recreational plan.

Prime locations along the OSNHT corridor are identified in this document for the addition of trailheads, waysides, overlooks and kiosks to make the trail more accessible and better engage the public.

There are many opportunities for improving the OSNHT recreational and educational experience between Page, Arizona and Littlefield, Arizona. The OSNHT across this region could serve as an artery to highlight other historic, cultural and recreational opportunities. This Recreation and Development Strategy includes sites that could illuminate local history and add to the overall recreational experience for the visiting public.

Grant Participants

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Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy

Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy

Prepared for:
- BLM - Arizona Strip District
- BLM - Dixie Field Office
- BLM - Kanab Field Office
- BLM - Beaver Dam Wash NCA
- BLM - Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument
- NPS - Glen Canyon National Recreation Area

Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy

Northern Arizona and Southern Utah Project Area

Prepared By: Paul Ostapuk, Old Spanish Trail Association

Funded By: BLM AZ NLCS ASD
OLD SPANISH TRAIL L16AC00320
Executive Summary

The traveling public can best be served by increasing awareness of the Old Spanish National Historic Trail (OSNHT) through installation of highway signs, updating existing maps at agency visitor centers that currently fail to show the OSNHT route and, in general, increasing the number of tangible public displays. OSNHT Interpretation across this region is almost non-existent except for a wayside at the Highway 89 turnout junction with the Paria town site road, a plaque installed at the St. George Crosby Family Confluence Park on the Virgin River and the newly installed waysides with mule caravan silhouettes on Highway 91 near Castle Cliff, UT. Increasing the number of certified OSNHT sites and physical trail assets will not only improve recreational experiences related to the OSNHT, it can also provide an additional portal for linking to NPS and BLM digital mobile applications.

A summary of enhanced recreational and educational trail experiences include:

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**BLM Custom Kiosk Design**
Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy
Northern Arizona and Southern Utah Project Area

NPS and BLM Mobile Applications for National Historic Trails

Screenshots of NPS’ “Find a Park” mobile application which includes the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.

Screenshot of BLM Old Spanish Trail “Explorer App”

Integration of QR Codes into OSNHT Wayside Exhibits and Interpretive Panels can provide an additional portal for linking to NPS and BLM digital mobile applications

Example of a NPS OLSP QR Code included as part of a wayside exhibit

Example of a BLM Explorer QR Code included as part of a wayside exhibit
Today, the Old Spanish Nation Historic Trail (OSNHT) is widely known as the “longest, most arduous, and crookedest pack mule route in America.”

From 1829 to 1848, the 1,200-mile trail was considered the most feasible path between Los Angeles and Santa Fe for traveling Mexican caravans.

The trail provided a trade route for quality woolen goods produced in New Mexico, exchanged for a surplus supply of horses and mules raised on California's ranchos. Trade with American Indians was also prominent, including an extensive slave trade of American Indian women and children who were forced to become domestic servants for ranchers in New Mexico and California.

The route was established along a loose network of American Indian footpaths which crossed the wide expanse of the Colorado Plateau and the Mojave Desert.

Photo: Montage of historic and modern day uses of the trail
Typical Trail Elements and Alternatives

The following typical trail elements can help bring the trail to life. There are five categories that the elements fall under: trailheads, waysides/overlooks, campgrounds, kiosks/interpretive structures and visitor centers/museums. All of these elements help make the trail and its history accessible, enabling people to explore the Old Spanish NHT and the surrounding landscape. The graphics represent what a typical facility may look like when labeled on a map, not what would be built at each location specifically.

Trailheads

Trailheads are placed at the beginning of a trail. They typically include parking, restrooms, and directional signage. They may also include staging areas, interpretive structures, shade structures and benches.

Trailheads should be placed at points along the trail where someone could park their vehicle and then experience the trail by hiking, biking, OHV riding, on horseback, etc.

Waysides and Overlooks

Waysides and overlooks are places along the trail where people can stop and learn about trail history or get information that will help them find and follow the trail.

The Old Spanish NHT has a unique and interesting history. Waysides and overlooks provide an opportunity to share this history with the public in the setting where the events took place.

Waysides/overlooks should be placed at locations that are easy to access from the main route of travel. Ideally, they should be placed at locations where the vantage point relates to the story included on the exhibits. They can be as simple as a parking spot and a sign, or may be more of a day-use area and include other elements such as restrooms, picnic tables, shade structures, etc.
Campgrounds and Day Use Areas

Campgrounds provide the opportunity to stay at a location overnight. They may be very simple—a designated area without amenities, or more established—with benches, fire-pits, tent pads, water, restrooms, picnic tables, etc.

There are locations where day use areas along the Old Spanish NHT in northern Arizona and southern Utah could be improved to tie into proposed recreational routes of the trail.

Kiosks and Interpretive Structures

Kiosks and interpretive structures provide the opportunity to educate people about history and the landscape that they are experiencing.

The Old Spanish NHT has a unique history that creates many opportunities to bring the trail to life through interpretation structures and kiosks.

These may be placed anywhere along the trail individually, or as features of trailheads, waysides, overlooks and campgrounds. Ideally, they interpret a visible resource.
Visitor Centers and Museums

Existing Visitor Centers and Museums along the Old Spanish NHT in Kane County, Coconino County, Washington County and Mojave County can provide travelers access to historic collections and detailed trail information. These locations serve as important information sources and travel hubs.

Big Water Visitor Center, Utah

Kanab Visitor Center, Kanab, Utah

Powell Museum, Page, Arizona

Pipe Spring National Monument, Arizona

Trail Element Alternatives

If development of a trail element is planned, each of the typical trail elements could have three levels of development: primitive, rustic, or developed. The following graphics show possible concepts for this range of development. Factors that could drive the level of development include the usage and location of the trail elements.

Trailhead Alternatives

Primitive

Rustic

Developed
Trail Element Alternatives (continued)

Wayside Alternatives
- Primitive
- Rustic
- Developed

Campground Alternatives
- Primitive
- Rustic
- Developed

Kiosks and Interpretive Structures Alternatives
- Primitive
- Rustic
- Developed

Visitor Centers and Museums Alternatives
- Primitive
- Rustic
- Developed
Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy
Northern Arizona and Southern Utah Project Area

Northern Arizona and Southern Utah Project Area
BLM Grant L16AC00320
Old Spanish Trail Segment Details
Recreation Trail Segments
Segment A – Page, AZ / Big Water, UT Area Map
Segment A – Page, AZ / Big Water, UT Area

- Powell Museum / Glen Canyon Conservancy
- Sand Hills / Gunsight Pass Hiking
- Lone Rock Campground
- Wahweap Overlook and Wahweap Creek Hiking
- BLM Big Water Visitor Center

Key Opportunities
- Installation of OSNHT wayside exhibits at visitor centers and overlooks
- Establish observation points overlooking the OSNHT corridor
- Trailhead hiking in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument
Segment A – Page, AZ / Big Water, UT Area

Powell Museum / Glen Canyon Conservancy

Key Opportunities
• Install new OSNHT wayside exhibit to supplement existing assets at the Powell Museum and Glen Canyon Conservancy Visitor Center that include:
  • OSNHT Passport Stamp Location
  • 3D Regional Map
  • Dominguez-Escalante Bicentennial Marker
  • Retail Bookstore
• Consider NPS Certified Site designation for the Glen Canyon Conservancy Visitor Center
Segment A – Page, AZ / Big Water, UT Area

GSENM Lone Rock Campground and Wahweap Creek (Armijo’s White Canyon)

Key Opportunities
- Install new OSNHT interpretative panel at the Lone Rock campground restrooms where other wayside panels exist and overlooks the Old Spanish Trail corridor
- Three season hiking along Wahweap creek between Big Water, Utah, Lone Rock campground and intermediate access points.
  - Note: Hiking in summer months along Wahweap Creek not recommended due to hot temperatures and the risk of flash flooding
Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy
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Segment A – Page, AZ / Big Water, UT Area

GCNRA Sand Hills / Gunsight Canyon

Key Opportunities
- Boat accessible hiking to Paso Por Aqui Año 1776 Inscription and Sand Hills Trail between Warm Creek and Gunsight Canyon
- Establishment of Historic District as part of the National Register of Historic Places to include the 1776 Inscription site, Gunsight Pass, the historic Sand Hills trail traveled by indigenous people, Dominguez-Escalante expedition, 1869 Utah Territorial Militia, Jacob Hamblin and John Wesley Powell
Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy
Northern Arizona and Southern Utah Project Area

Segment A – Page, AZ / Big Water, UT Area

Big Water Visitor Center – BLM GSENM

Key Opportunities
• Update “Exploring the Monument” map to show the route of the Old Spanish NHT
• Installation of new interpretive panel above bench on vacant wall
• Acknowledge that the Big Water Visitor Center is located directly on the OSNHT
• Consider retracement route for hiking and equestrian opportunities along Coyote Wash across Highway 89, north of the Visitor Center
Segment B – Paria River Area

- Paria River Contact Station
- Toad Stools Trailhead
- White House Campground
- Catstair Canyon Trailhead
- Cottonwood Wash – Box of the Paria (East Trailhead)
- Highway 89 Paria Townsite Turnout
- Paria Townsite – Box of the Paria (West Trailhead)
- Kimball Valley Equestrian Route
Segment B – Paria River Area Map
Segment B – Paria River Area (East)

- Paria River Contact Station
- Toad Stools Trailhead
- White House Campground
- Catstair Canyon Trailhead
- Cottonwood Wash Road
- Box of the Paria River - East

Key Opportunities
- New waysides at Paria River Contact Station, Cottonwood Canyon Road Junction and Toadstools Trailhead
- Observation points along Cottonwood Canyon Road
- Installation of OSNHT wayside and silhouettes at the Box of Paria River (east trailhead)
Segment B – Paria River Area (East)

Recreational Opportunities near and along the Paria River

Catstair Canyon with petroglyphs and cowboy glyphs near Highway 89
The Cottonwood Canyon Road leads to the Box of Paria River east trailhead and offers opportunities for mountain biking.
Segment B – Paria River Area (West)

- Highway 89 Paria Townsite Turnout
- Box of Paria River (West Trailhead)
- Kimball Valley

Key Opportunities
- Installation of mule caravan silhouettes at Highway 89 turnout behind existing OSNHT interpretive sign
- Installation of OST wayside and silhouettes at the Box of Paria River (west trailhead)
- Open range horse back riding in Kimball Valley along the OSNHT corridor
Segment C – Fredonia, Arizona Area

- Great Western Trail Staging Area
- Kanab Visitor Center
- Red Pueblo Museum
- Pipe Spring National Monument

Key Opportunities
- Installation of new interpretive waysides at agency Visitor Centers and the Red Pueblo Museum
- Update existing agency maps to show the OSNHT
- OHV, equestrian and mountain biking opportunities at the Great Western Trail Staging Area
Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy
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Segment C – Fredonia, Arizona Area Map

Pipe Spring National Monument
(Armijo Route - Old Spanish National Historic Trail)
Segment C – Fredonia, Arizona Area

Kanab Visitor Center - BLM GSENM
Red Pueblo Museum, Fredonia, AZ
Pipe Spring National Monument - NPS

Key Opportunities

• Update existing GSENM map to show the route of the OSNHT
• Installation of OSNHT waysides at Kanab Visitor Center, Red Pueblo Museum and Pipe Spring National Monument.
• Install mule caravan silhouettes at the Red Pueblo Museum (named for a nearby Armijo caravan campsite)
• Consider NPS Certified Site designation for the Red Pueblo Museum
Segment D – Arizona Strip / Hurricane Cliffs Area

- Arizona Strip / Coyote Plain Observation Point
- Rock Canyon (Armijo’s Limestone Canyon with pools of water campsite)
- Honeymoon Trail
- Hurricane Cliffs Observation Point

Key Opportunities
- Observation Points overlooking Armijo’s Coyote Plain and atop the Hurricane Cliffs.
- Trailhead hiking opportunity at Armijo’s Rock Canyon
- OHV, equestrian and mountain biking along the route of the Honeymoon Trail.
Segment D – Hurricane Cliffs Area Map
Segment D – Hurricane Cliffs Area

Rock Canyon
• Armijo’s 1829 diary reference to a campsite location at a “limestone canyon with pools of water”
• Situated along the route of the Honeymoon Trail
• Outstanding recreational opportunities exist for camping and hiking at this location
• Potential to be nominated for the National Register of Historic Places

Camping at the mouth of Rock Canyon along the Honeymoon Trail
Segment E – St. George, Utah Area

- Fort Pearce Heritage Site
- Virgin River Park - St. George, UT
- Beaver Dam Mountains / Bulldog Canyon

Key Opportunities
- Installation of new interpretive waysides at Fort Pearce
- Trailhead hiking opportunities at Fort Pearce
- OHV, equestrian and mountain biking through Warner Valley and along Bulldog Canyon / Apex Road (north)
- Observation Points near Bulldog Pass / Beaver Dam Mountains
Segment E – St. George, Utah Area Map
Segment E – St. George, Utah Area

Fort Pearce Heritage Site located in Warner Valley

Virgin River Trail in St. George, Utah

One of many key observation points (KOP) along the northern section of the Bulldog Pass/Apex Road
Segment F – Littlefield, Arizona Area

- Mojave Desert / Joshua Tree Road (Scenic Backway)
- Highway 91 - Mule caravan silhouettes and interpretive panels near Castle Cliff, UT
- Highway 91 - Big Bend of the Virgin River
- Highway 91 - Dispersed camping area near Littlefield, AZ
- Virgin River Bridge - Scenic Blvd near Scenic, AZ

Key Opportunities

- Key Observation Points of the Mojave Desert landscape near Bulldog Knolls
- Install OSNHT waysides exhibits along the Mojave Desert / Joshua Tree Road (Scenic Backway) and at the dispersed camping area near Littlefield, Arizona

(Highway 91 – Wayside Exhibits and Mule Caravan Silhouettes (Beaver Dam Wash National Conservation Area))
Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy
Northern Arizona and Southern Utah Project Area

Segment F – Littlefield, Arizona Area Map #1

Key Opportunities

Observation Points
- Mojave Desert near Bulldog Knolls

Interpretive Signage
- Wayside displays along Mojave Desert / Joshua Tree Road (Scenic Backway)

Existing Waysides on the Mojave Desert / Joshua Tree Road (Scenic Backway)
Segment F – Littlefield, Arizona Area

Examples of outstanding Mojave Desert landscape along the Mojave Desert and Joshua Tree Road (Scenic Backway)
Proposed Recreation and Development Strategy
Northern Arizona and Southern Utah Project Area

Segment F – Littlefield, Arizona Area Map #2

Key Opportunities

Observation Points
- Big Bend of the Virgin River
- Virgin River Bridge (Scenic Blvd)

Interpretive Signage
- Install wayside at disperse camping area north of Highway 91 near Sand Hollow Wash
Proposed Interpretive Themes

Traditional interpretive themes of the Old Spanish Trail include:

- The opening of mule caravans routes between New Mexico and California which established commercial trade across the region and introduced cultural consequences (e.g. interactions with indigenous populations, slave trading, emigration and immigration).
- Navigation during the fall, winter and spring to avoid high river flows and hot desert temperatures
- How geography shaped the trail and presented obstacles to navigation
- The availability of key resources along the trail (water and forage)
- American use of the trail
- How trail use evolved over time and became an important transportation corridor for wagon roads, highways, transmission lines, etc.)
- Changes to the landscape and ecosystems since the period of historic use (1829-1848)
- Conflict and development of important water resources
- Threats to the trail due to development, including renewable energy projects
- Castle Cliff as an important gateway that divided the Mojave Desert with the Colorado Plateau region
The 1829 Antonio Armijo Diary can help guide a number of interpretive themes across this project area.

- December 6. At the Rio Grande (Colorado) Crossing of the Fathers: on that day we reconnoitered the ford and it was found passable, and three individuals who forded it observed that there were three fresh tracks which they followed until dark without overtaking anyone.
- December 7. Stopping. The above mentioned individuals joined us relating what has already been recorded.
- December 8. We stopped the train and repaired the upgrade of the canyon, the same one which had been worked by the padres.
- December 10. At the artenjal (rimrock?) of Ceja Colorada (Cockscomb Ridge)
- On this day there was found a settlement of Payuches, with no mishap; it is a gentle and cowardly nation.
- December 11. At the creek (Paria) of Ceja Canyon (Cockscomb Ridge)
- December 12. At the top of the tree-covered ridge (Buckskin Mountain): no water.
- December 13. At Colorado Pueblo: no water, but we used snow instead.
- December 14. At Carnero (Kanab) Creek.
- December 15. At Agua de la Vieja (Pipe Spring)
- December 16. At the Coyote Plains without any water.
Proposed Interpretive Themes

1829 Antonio Armijo Diary (continued)

- December 17. At Caloso (Rock) Canyon: water from water holes.
- December 18. Stopping: reconnaissance party went out and returned with nothing to report.
- December 19. At Stinking Water Canyon: permanent water.
- December 20. At the Severo (Virgin) River.
- December 22. At the Milpas [Cornfield] River: at this point the reconnaissance party rendezvoused without mishap.
- December 24. Below [or beyond] the Milpas River.
- December 25. We hit the Severo (Virgin) River again from which point the reconnaissance party went out.
- December 26. Down the same river.
- December 27. We found a settlement of Indians with rings in their noses. Nothing happened for these Indians are gentle and cowardly.
- December 28. Down the same river.
- December 29. At the slough of the same river.
- December 30. At the aforementioned river.
- December 31. At the same river the reconnaissance party rendezvoused.
- Jan 1, 1830. Again at the Rio Grande (Colorado): Citizen Rafael Rivera is missing from the reconnaissance party of the day before.
In Conclusion

The public craves opportunities to connect with natural landscapes and historic trail settings.

Waysides, trailheads and observation points play an important role in making that connection in a tangible way. Signage can also serve as a physical portal to multi-media digital applications accessible through QR codes.

“In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation, trails should be established”

National Trail System Act, 1968