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Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission

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PRESS RELEASE

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Gullah Geechee Corridor's Management Plan Is Approved

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan has officially been approved by the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, making it an official document with which to begin implementation of projects and programs. The letter of notification is dated May 6, 2013. The Commission will convene its quarterly meeting at 9 a.m., at Temple Missionary Baptist Church, 504 Church St., Conway, SC., with a management plan update from 10 – 10:30 a.m.

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, established by federal legislation in 2006, is the only one of 49 National Heritage Areas that promotes the living culture of an African American population. It spans the coastal communities from Wilmington, North Carolina, through South Carolina and Georgia, to St. Augustine, Florida.

"Please accept my congratulations on the successful planning process that the heritage area partners have accomplished," wrote signatory Rachel Jacobson, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks. "I commend you for completing this well conceived plan, and for involving interested citizens and organizations in the planning process. I share your vision for the Corridor, in which we may jointly create an environment that celebrates the legacy and continuing contributions of the Gullah Geechee people."

U.S. House Assistant Democratic Leader James E. Clyburn (D-SC), credits his efforts toward the creation of the Gullah Geechee Corridor as the most popular bill he has sponsored. "I commend the Gullah Geechee

Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission for their four years of intensive work to create this management plan,” he said. “Their efforts have already brought tremendous attention to the Gullah Geechee culture, and this plan will serve as a blueprint to not only educate people about the culture, but also to ensure its sustainability for future generations. It is gratifying to see the vision I had for the Corridor coming to fruition, and I thank all of those involved who made this possible.”

Ronald Daise, Chairman of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, said, “We are overjoyed that the Gullah Geechee Corridor’s Management Plan finally has been approved! It’s a day we’ve been awaiting for a very long time. Commissioners are ready to partner with grassroots and civic organizations, state and local governments, businesses and individuals to implement programs that will empower and enlighten Gullah Geechee people to sustain the culture.”

Daise said his first thoughts upon receiving notification were to give thanks. “Thanks to God and to Gullah Geechee ancestors and community members who live the culture. Thanks for the Gullah Geechee Commission’s Management Plan Review Committee members who worked diligently to produce the plan’s documents and who provided almost endless edits and rewrites. Thanks to Congressman James Clyburn for his vision and sponsorship of the legislation that created this unique four-state corridor. And thanks to the National Park Service for its guidance and support throughout this journey.”

Martha Raymond, National Coordinator for Heritage Areas, said, “I wish to offer my heartfelt congratulations on the crafting, completion and approval of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Management Plan. What an excellent example of grassroots public participation efforts, charting the way forward for the Corridor!”

The Gullah Geechee Commission began developing the management plan in 2008 and completed its production in 2012. From information gathered during 21 public engagement meetings throughout the Gullah Geechee Corridor in 2009, commissioners formed the management plan’s approach and framework.

“In the words of an old spiritual, current and former Commissioners and NPS Community Specialist Michael Allen—who initially served as Gullah Geechee Coordinator—have been ‘*workin on a buildin, wit a firm foundation*’ for years now,” said Daise. “The public has watched and waited. Some grew weary, yet others remain filled with excitement and anticipation. There’s a growing understanding and acceptance ‘*dat Gullah Geechee mean a lot!*’, that is, that Gullah Geechee culture and heritage are indeed significant to our American fabric. There are many who stand ready ‘*fa jine we,*’ that is, join hands with us to develop programs and ideas that will promote education, documentation and preservation, and economic development among Gullah Geechee people and within Gullah Geechee communities. These are the three areas in which prospective partners should strive to develop their partnership applications.

Partnership applications to the Gullah Geechee Commission are available online at the Corridor's website, www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org, and in management plan documents at public libraries throughout the Corridor. Applications may be submitted online or mailed to: GGCHCC, 284-A King Street, Charleston, SC 29424. The dates of the initial application review period will be announced at a time following the Gullah Geechee Commission's November 2013 quarterly meeting.

The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Foundation, a 501 (c) 3 and the Gullah Geechee Commission's only fiscal partner, will begin receiving financial donations to assist the Commission to reach its goals and vision on July 1. At present, tax-deductible donations to the Gullah Geechee Commission may be made at the Corridor's website.

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