

1. Introduction and Summary

This report is a feasibility study that assesses the potential scope, scale, and character of a proposed National Heritage Area centered on geological and cultural resources in the eastern Atlanta Metropolitan Area, including parts of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry Counties.

1.1 The Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Concept

Arabia Mountain and other nearby prominent granite formations are part of a granite substrate that has been centrally linked to human settlement and activity for thousands of years. The history of human settlement in this region is intimately connected to its geological resources, starting over 7,000 years ago with the quarrying and trading of soapstone.

Located within the fast-growing Atlanta region, these dramatic monadnock formations communicate a complex and layered history of quarrying, commerce, and nature made vivid to residents by remaining active quarries, stone buildings, and the city of Lithonia (*Greek for "place of rock"*), named after the resource that launched its growth.

The corridor proposed as a National Heritage Area includes the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, the city of Lithonia, the state-owned Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, portions of the South River, and several active quarries. The area retains an open and small-scale character, in contrast to the character of the fast growing metropolitan area to the immediate west. A National Heritage Area can convey the complex history of the area, while also serving as a model for cooperative public and private sector partnerships to preserve, conserve, and interpret its natural and cultural resources.

A significant start has been made in this effort by the State of Georgia, DeKalb and Rockdale Counties, and the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, working cooperatively to advance this concept. National Heritage Area designation will accelerate the progress and prominence of these cooperative efforts and will be a catalyst for further focus and ongoing commitments.

1.2 Structure of this Report

The intent of the report is to identify the historical importance of the study area, to review key resources, and to raise possible heritage planning concepts. This information has been made available to members of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance (the Alliance), as well as to others with an interest in the future of this area. The report has been developed based upon meetings with selected agencies and individuals in the study area, review of existing documents and plans, and field visits. The data collected has been commensurate with a broad-based feasibility study, and has not been intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive. The Report includes the following chapters:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and Summary** – provides an overview of the proposal and the report.
- **Chapter 2: Local Commitments** – reviews the origins of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance and the commitments of local, county, and state governments, as well as non-profit entities to the heritage area concept.
- **Chapter 3: The Study Area** – describes key features of the study area environment.
- **Chapter 4: History and Resources** – highlights the evolution of the area, special features, and key resources.
- **Chapter 5: Interpretive Themes** – suggests themes that are important to the area's history and should be interpreted as part of a heritage area plan.
- **Chapter 6: The Concept** – defines the concept for the scope and scale of the heritage area plan.
- **Chapter 7: Findings on Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility and Suitability** – reviews how the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area study area meets the criteria for National Heritage Area designation and proposes appropriate next steps.
- **Appendices**

Appendix 1 includes a bibliography of sources.

Appendix 2 highlights meetings that have been carried out during this study.

Appendix 3 includes a description of alternatives that were presented during the course of this study.

Appendix 4 includes a list of flora specific to the granite outcrop ecosystems found at Arabia Mountain and Panola Mountain.

Appendix 5 includes letters of commitment to the proposed National Heritage Area.

2. Local Commitments

This study and the National Heritage Area designation are supported by numerous local efforts. This section presents an account of the key individuals, organizations and contributors that are actively working to seek and secure federal assistance for the proposed Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area.

2.1 The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance

An alliance of civic-minded individuals, non-profit organizations, political leaders, governmental agencies, environmentalists, and community activists has been established for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area. The mission of the Alliance is to ensure that the recreational, natural and historical resources of Arabia Mountain and its environs are protected, connected by greenway corridors, and well-managed to provide citizens and future generations the opportunity to enjoy this magnificent feature of Georgia's heritage.

The predecessors to the Alliance include a task force of environmental experts formed and facilitated by the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department in 1988 to assist the County in developing a management plan for the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve. From the task force recommendation to establish a non-profit organization, the Friends of Davidson-Arabia Mountain was established. This organization sponsored clean-ups at the preserve and worked to develop a detailed management plan. Although this group was effective it was not sustainable. Some members from the Friends of Davidson-Arabia Mountain participate today in the Alliance.

Initiated by the Director of DeKalb County Parks and Recreation, Becky Kelley, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance began to meet monthly in early 1999 with a core group of Parks and Recreation Department staff, community leaders, environmentalists and government officials. Today the participant list of the Alliance includes two hundred people. The Alliance has been successful in obtaining over \$5 million in cash and in-kind contributions, \$2.8 million in land contributions and pledges for an additional \$3.25 million.

The Alliance is currently working under the non-profit organization, Partners for DeKalb Parks, Inc. This organization was originally established to provide support for DeKalb County parks but has since merged with a regional support organization, Park Pride, Inc. The by-laws of Partners for DeKalb Parks, Inc. have been amended to focus entirely on Arabia Mountain and its environs and expanded to include Rockdale and Henry Counties.

There are currently no paid employees of the Alliance other than those who participate from the various government entities. It is anticipated that when Arabia Mountain and its environs are designated as a National Heritage Area a paid staff will be necessary for this project to realize its potential.

The Alliance activities are totally consistent with the DeKalb Parks and Recreation Department's Strategic Plan, DeKalb County's Comprehensive Plan and the Governor's Greenspace Plan.

Local and regional support for the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area is apparent by affirmative newspaper articles, robust citizen participation, proclamations of support from DeKalb and Rockdale County governments, and contributions to the Alliance of time, funds, and property interests.

2.2 Liaison with other Public Agencies

The National Park Service (NPS) has been closely involved in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance's efforts and in the study for National Heritage Area designation. The NPS has given technical support to these efforts and is working on corresponding projects along the South River corridor near Panola Mountain State Conservation Park to promote open space and recreational trails as part of a greenway link. The NPS has also been engaged in the numerous meetings and public efforts to support this study, lending technical assistance.

Local governments have been a strong and involved supporter of the Alliance and Heritage Area efforts. Many departments of the Counties are committed to providing assistance to the proposed National Heritage Area. The DeKalb County Department of Parks and Recreation has committed significant technical assistance to the Alliance, assigned a full time ranger for the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Center, and manages many of the nearby open space areas such as Miner's Creek Preserve and the Everett property. The Rockdale County Parks and Recre-

ation Department manages the South Rockdale Community Park, which is a key open space resource and part of the proposed greenway for the Heritage Area. DeKalb County's Chamber of Commerce and Historical Society have provided technical assistance to the Alliance for this feasibility study.

The State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources manages and protects Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, one of the key resources of the proposed Heritage Area located in Rockdale County. The State has also shown willingness to support the National Heritage Area designation efforts.

2.3 Contributions

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance has successfully demonstrated the ability to attract contributions from a variety of sources. The Alliance has received significant in-kind and fiscal contributions in a short period of time. **Table 1** below outlines the financial contributions to date as well as ongoing efforts seeking additional funding.

Table 1: Financial Contributions

<i>Year</i>	<i>Contributor</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Cash and In-Kind Contributions			
1997	Atlanta Urban Resource Partnership	Interpretive Signs	\$20,000
1997	DeKalb County HOST Funds	Nature Center Parking Lot	\$40,000
1997	Craig Tanner	Photography	\$15,000
1998	Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Recreation Assistance Grant	
		Accessible Classroom	\$10,000
1999	Roy Ashley & Associates, Inc.	Graphics/Presentation	\$12,000
1999	Jump/Cut Productions, Inc.	Advocacy and Vaughters Video	\$45,000
1999	Wardlaw Family Foundation	Advocacy Video	\$10,000
1999	Davidson Family and Others	Operations	\$10,000
1999	Local Law Enforcement Block Grant	Kiosks and Trail Cairns (markers)	\$20,000
1999	Turner Foundation	National Heritage Area Study	\$75,000
2000	Roy Ashley & Associates, Inc.	Power Point Presentation	\$12,500
2000	Georgia Power Foundation	Operations	\$25,000
2000	Wardlaw Family Foundation	Operations	\$15,000
2000	Richard Rollins	CPA	\$2,000
2000	Joyner & Burnette	Legal Services	\$3,000
2000	SunTrust	Operations	\$5,000
2000	Kelly Barker	Web Site Design	\$5,000
2000	Atlanta Urban Resources Partnership	Education Video, Brochures and Signs	\$78,000
2000	The Nature Conservancy/Local Foundation	Acquisition	\$1,000,000
2001	Cong. Cynthia McKinney/Sen. Max Cleland	Wetland, Watershed Management	\$100,000
2001	Governor's Pledge	Acquisition	\$3,500,000
2001	Transportation Enhancement Act funds	PATH – Multi-use trail	\$1,200,000
	Total Value of Cash and In-kind Contributions		\$6,202,500
Property Contributions (MAI appraised value)			
1973	Davidson & LWCF	Davidson-Arabia	\$736,530
1996	DeCastro	Homestead	\$83,700
1997	Everett	South River (North)	\$318,200
1998	Everett	South River (South)	\$436,800
1999	Freeman	Meadow & Outcrop	\$700,000
2000	Coffey	Outcrop and Forest	\$160,000
2000	Pattillo	Forest and Field on Klondike Road	\$333,000
	Total Value of Property Contributions		\$2,768,230
Anticipated and Pending Funding			
2001	DeKalb County Greenspace Program*	Acquisition (multi-year)	to be determined
2001	Turner Foundation and others**		to be determined

* Based upon approval, March 20, 2001, of county-wide green space acquisition program funded at \$125,000,000.

** The Alliance is pursuing significant grants from other possible local and national partners.

Figure 1
Study Area Context

