

Testimony of

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Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area
and the
Alliance of National Heritage Areas

before the

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Daniel M. Rice. I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, a regional private non-profit organization working on the development of the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area from Cleveland to New Philadelphia, Ohio in northeast Ohio. I am here on behalf of the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area and the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, representing the 49 National Heritage Areas across the country. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before the Committee today to offer testimony supporting funding for the Heritage Partnership Program, within the National Park Service, Department of Interior Appropriations Bill for FY2015. Working in partnership with private, local, state and federal partners, National Heritage Areas are conserving nationally significant resources, stimulating community and economic development and creating and retaining thousands of jobs across the county. Working in partnership with the National Park Service, we are improving the lives of ordinary citizens, in rural and urban areas across this country in extraordinary ways, without the responsibility of ownership and long-term maintenance by the National Park Service. I thank Chairman Calvert, Ranking Member Moran, Congressman Joyce and all of the Members of the Subcommittee for your tremendous support for National Heritage Areas and the opportunity to offer testimony today.

Before I address the fiscal year 2015 appropriation request pending before the subcommittee, thank you, and the subcommittee staff, on behalf of all National Heritage Areas for your steadfast support. I especially thank you for the FY2014 appropriation of \$18,289,000 for the Heritage Partnership Program as well as directive language extending the authorization of 12 sunseting National Heritage Areas through Fiscal Year 2015. I fully appreciate that without the support of each and every one of you, we simply could not go it alone and most, if not all, of what has been accomplished over the past three decades would have been impossible. In order to continue stimulating community and economic development and creating jobs, we need full funding for the Heritage Partnership Program, or at least to maintain funding at FY 2014 levels, and we need permanent authorizations for 49 National Heritage Areas.

Full Funding of the Heritage Partnership Program and permanent authorizations for National Heritage Areas provides the stability that enables us to continue to leverage significant amounts of private, local, and state investment in our nationally significant resources, stimulate community and economic development and build sustainable communities. National Heritage Areas are an innovative approach to resource conservation and they represent the future direction of the National Park Service in the 21st century. Working together, we are stimulating job growth and creating legacies for future generations.

From the Lake Champlain in Vermont to the Atchafalaya bayou in Louisiana to Yuma Crossing in Arizona, National Heritage Areas build trails, restore historic buildings, conserve natural areas and celebrate cultural traditions to improve the quality of life and stimulate community and economic development. In his policy memorandum of March 14, 2012, National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis endorsed the National Heritage Area program and noted that such programs help the National Park Service “to reach beyond its park boundaries” and “form a vital part of the National Park Service mission.” Director Jarvis noted that “I have witnessed the growth and maturity of the heritage area movement and of individual areas, and am convinced of their effectiveness and that they are places where small investments pay huge dividends.”

As catalysts for community and economic revitalization, National Heritage Areas implement projects through public/private partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, and collaborate with private businesses, foundations, non-profit organizations, state and local governments to ensure that the regional goals of cultural, historical, recreational and resource conservation are met. In the process, National Heritage Areas strive to improve the quality of life in their regions by fostering the development of sustainable economies using heritage as a building block. National Heritage Areas contribute to the quality of life in communities where heritage and resource conservation become building blocks for community revitalization, job creation and tourism. In many instances, National Heritage Areas play a role as the initiator, seeding projects that might never be funded in more traditional methods or regional investment strategies by adding heritage into the development mix, National Heritage Areas provide an ability for a community to maintain a unique sense of place, enhancing development opportunities while teaching about America’s history and culture. For over 30 years, National Heritage Areas have implemented regional resource conservation strategies as the foundation for community and economic revitalization and the creation of employment opportunities. From the interpretation of water resources in Cache La Poudre in Fort Collins, Colorado, to the Wheeling Artisan Center in Wheeling, West Virginia to the revitalization of textile mills along the Augusta Canal in Augusta, Georgia, National Heritage Areas look to use their unique heritage as the foundation for community and economic development strategies.

In 2012, the Northeast Regional Office of the National Park Service commissioned an economic impact study and hired an independent firm, Tripp Umbach, to measure the community and economic impact of National Heritage Areas. As a leading expert in their field, Tripp Umbach has conducted more than 400 customized economic impact

studies for major corporations, healthcare organizations, universities, and non-profit organizations throughout the world. Tripp Umbach collected primary data from six National Heritage Areas, including information on operation and capital expenditures and tourism information. According to the Tripp Umbach study, the overall annual economic impact of National Heritage Areas in the United States is \$12.9 billion, which is a direct result of federal funding provided annually for the Heritage Partnership Program within the National Park Service. The economic impact is comprised of three main areas: tourism, operational expenditures and grant making activities, with the majority of the impact (99%) generated by tourism spending. This includes:

- \$4.6 billion in direct impact (tourist spending, National Heritage Area operational expenditures and grant making activities).
- \$8.3 billion in indirect and induced impacts (employee spending and businesses supporting the tourism industry).

The study further concluded that National Heritage Areas also support more than 140,000 jobs throughout the nation, including 94,000 jobs directly and 54,000 indirectly or induced jobs. The majority of employment supported by National Heritage Areas is within employment sectors traditionally associated with tourism, restaurants, retail sales, lodging and entertainment. The Tripp Umbach report concluded that the overall impact of National Heritage Areas and their related spending and operational activities generates \$1.2 billion in Federal taxes. The type of taxes paid includes payroll taxes, income taxes and corporate taxes.

For over twenty years, I have had the privilege of working on the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area in northeast Ohio and witnessing firsthand the incredible community and economic development impact and influence of public-private partnerships. The Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area is a regional and national treasure that celebrates the unique natural, historical and recreational resources along the Ohio & Erie Canal from Cleveland to New Philadelphia in northeast Ohio. Working in partnership with our private, local, state and national partners, and with the full support of our six Congressional districts and two Senators, we are developing a 101-mile multi-use recreational trail, conserving hundreds of acres of natural areas, preserving historic structures and stimulating over \$350,000,000 of community and economic development activity. For every \$1 of federal seed funding, we are leveraging over \$3 of private, local, and state investment.

Some examples of our accomplishments of the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area include:

- Development of 86 miles of the multi-use recreational Towpath Trail from Cleveland to New Philadelphia, Ohio. To date, over \$90,000,000 of private, local, state and federal resources have been invested in this regional community and economic development resource. Over 2,500,000 million hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders utilized the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail in 2013.

- Implementation of four county trail and green space plans with over 400 miles of connecting trails and 1,000 acres of green space. Since 2002, Summit County Government has awarded 76 trail grants totaling \$1,534,393, which has leveraged \$22,076, 800 in private, local, state and federal investment and retained 638 trail construction, engineering and design jobs.
- Collaboration with regional initiatives like the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, including development of a \$9,000,000 riverfront restoration along the Cuyahoga River in downtown Cleveland.
- In 2013 over 160,000 volunteer hours on National Heritage Area related programs and projects, and over 250,000 participants in educational programs.

National Heritage Areas have a remarkable track record of promoting stewardship, conserving nationally significant resources, and stimulating community and economic development. Through the creation of public-private partnerships with private, local, state and federal partners, National Heritage Areas raise funds to match the federal investment of the National Park Service grant invested in the heritage area. Working together, we are stimulating local economies, building sustainable communities and creating jobs. The partnership strategy of National Heritage Areas is to leverage private, local, state and federal investment to make grants in heritage development projects that fit within the scope of the management plan. The initial, and most critical investment, comes from the appropriation that Congress provides each year to the National Heritage Areas. Just as much of the past accomplishments of the National Heritage Areas have been due to the participation and involvement of the National Park Service, much of our future success depends on the continued partnership and funding of the National Park Service. As the Management Plan for the Ohio & Erie Canalway states, “Alliances and regional coalitions are critical to the long-term success of the National Heritage Corridor as well as to the accomplishment of short-term projects.”

Mr. Chairman, now, more than ever, we need to maintain our partnership with the National Park Service and renew our shared commitment to the National Heritage Area program. National Heritage Areas successfully promote and export the National Park Service ethic of resource conservation without significant permanent investment. Through full funding of the Heritage Partnership Program, we have the opportunity to build permanent community partnerships and develop funding diversification strategies for the conservation of nationally significant resources. Most importantly, National Heritage Areas expand the reach of the National Park Service and allows the Service to affect the lives of ordinary citizens, in urban areas and townships, across this country in extraordinary ways, without the responsibility of ownership and long-term maintenance by the National Park Service. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding the Heritage Partnership Program under the National Park Service, Department of Interior Appropriations bill before your Committee, and I am happy to answer any questions that you or other members of the Committee might have.