

Thank you Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Westerman, and Committee Members for taking the time today to hear my testimony.

I am here to ask that you consider my bill, H.R. 2107, the Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area Act.

This bill would establish a National Heritage Area in Northeast Florida running down the Atlantic Coast from the Florida-Georgia line to Flagler County.

Referred to by many as the "First Coast" – this stretch of Florida is home to our nation's oldest city, beautiful landscapes, and thousands of years of history.

Establishing a national heritage area would help preserve and celebrate the diverse groups that have called the First Coast home, from the Native American tribes of North Florida, to the settlers in St. Augustine, the Nation's Oldest City.

This area is a mosaic of cultures that has been shaped by its maritime heritage.

This bill would support public-private partnerships that promote conservation, historic preservation, recreation, and heritage tourism.

It is a culmination of years of grassroots work.

The Nation's Oldest Port National Heritage Area is supported by mayors, city councils, county commissions, local chambers of commerce, and many other organizations.

These grassroot groups have collaborated and worked with the National Park Service to complete an impressive feasibility study that outlines the history of the area and its many historic sites.

This bill has extensive support in the areas encompassed in the NHA, and last Congress it received bipartisan support from most of the Florida delegation.

It is my hope that this Committee will take up this important bipartisan bill that will create jobs, support the local economy, and preserve the stories of those that have inhabited and built Florida's First Coast.

I'm happy to take any questions, and yield back the rest of my time.