

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY

For the Record

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Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

Committee on Natural Resources

U.S. House of Representatives

The Colorado National Heritage Areas Reauthorization Act (H.R. 7218)

Subcommittee Chair Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee, my name is Sabrina Stoker, and I am the Executive Director of the Poudre Heritage Alliance, the nonprofit organization that manages the Cache la Poudre National Heritage Area in Northern Colorado. As you may be aware, the lower end of Cache la Poudre River was designated by Congress in 2009 as an area of cultural and historical significance, due to the vital role this region played in the development of Western water law and the evolution of complex agricultural irrigation systems. The Heritage Area begins at the eastern edge of Roosevelt National Forest in Larimer County and extends for 45 miles through the 100-year floodplain of the Cache la Poudre River to its confluence with the South Platte River in Weld County. Your past and continued support of the three Colorado National Heritage Areas, also including the South Park and Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Areas, is greatly appreciated.

The Poudre Heritage Alliance does not own nor manage land within the Cache la Poudre National Heritage Area. Rather, our organization strives to promote a variety of historical and cultural opportunities, engage people in the river corridor, and inspire learning, preservation, recreation and stewardship through various programming efforts. Our programs include opportunities for student learning, river safety initiatives, storytelling, visitor wayfinding, historic preservation, oral history documentation, and a variety of family friendly events and activities along the Cache la Poudre River and its trail system. Community grants promote partnerships throughout Larimer and Weld Counties, and are awarded for preservation, interpretation, and development activities that celebrate the cultural and historical significance of the Heritage Area. In the past decade we have invested over half a million dollars in 55 community different grants and leveraged nearly \$14 million dollars of public-private funding.

We embrace the importance of culture to the people and places along the Cache la Poudre River and the inclusive nature of telling the stories of *all* people.

The National Heritage Area Program is one of the Department of the Interior's most cost-effective initiatives, relying on a system of public-private partnerships in which every federal dollar is matched at an average ratio of 1:5 with other public and private funding. National Heritage Areas are funded through the National Recreation and Preservation Account and represent considerably less than 1% of the total National Park Service budget. An economic impact study completed by Tripp Umbach in 2017 found that the Cache la Poudre National Heritage Area generates an annual economic impact of \$81.6 million, while supporting over 1,000 jobs and generating \$6.9 million in tax revenue.

With federal funding for the three Colorado National Heritage Areas scheduled to sunset in 2024, we are pursuing legislative reauthorization of the Heritage Areas from multiple angles.

H.R. 7218 will provide the Colorado National Heritage Areas with crucial funding stability and the opportunity to continue telling the stories that celebrate the culture and heritage of the great State of Colorado. Similarly, the National Heritage Area Act of 2021 (H.R. 1316) will provide long-term stability to all 55 National Heritage Areas (NHAs) through the establishment of a National Heritage Areas System, which will standardize the designation, evaluation, and oversight of NHAs, while maintaining robust protections for private property rights. In addition to supporting the more focused H.R. 7218, we also urge you to consider supporting the National Heritage Act of 2021.

Your support of H.R. 7218 will protect these nationally significant landscapes in Colorado and ensure the continuation of the valuable long-term partnerships our National Heritage Areas have established, while reaffirming a commitment to the protection of private property rights. We are grateful for your continued support and commitment to reauthorizing the Colorado National Heritage Areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony to the Subcommittee.