

TESTIMONY BY SARA CAPEN
CHAIR, ALLIANCE OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 26, 2019

My name is Sara Capen, Director of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, and Chair of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, an organization which represents the vast majority of authorized National Heritage Areas. 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. I would like to begin by personally expressing my gratitude to this committee for their deep support of our program these past years.

The National Heritage Area (NHA) Program is one of the Department of the Interior's most cost-effective initiatives, relying on a public-private partnership in which every federal dollar is matched with an average of \$5.50 in other public and private funding. Often the match to the federal investment comes from the contributions of volunteers, who commit their time and expertise within individual National Heritage Areas to support programs, maintain trails, and assist with community conservation projects. In 2017 alone, National Heritage Areas benefited from 38,061 volunteers contributing over 823,902 hours for heritage area projects- a \$19.6 million- dollar value.

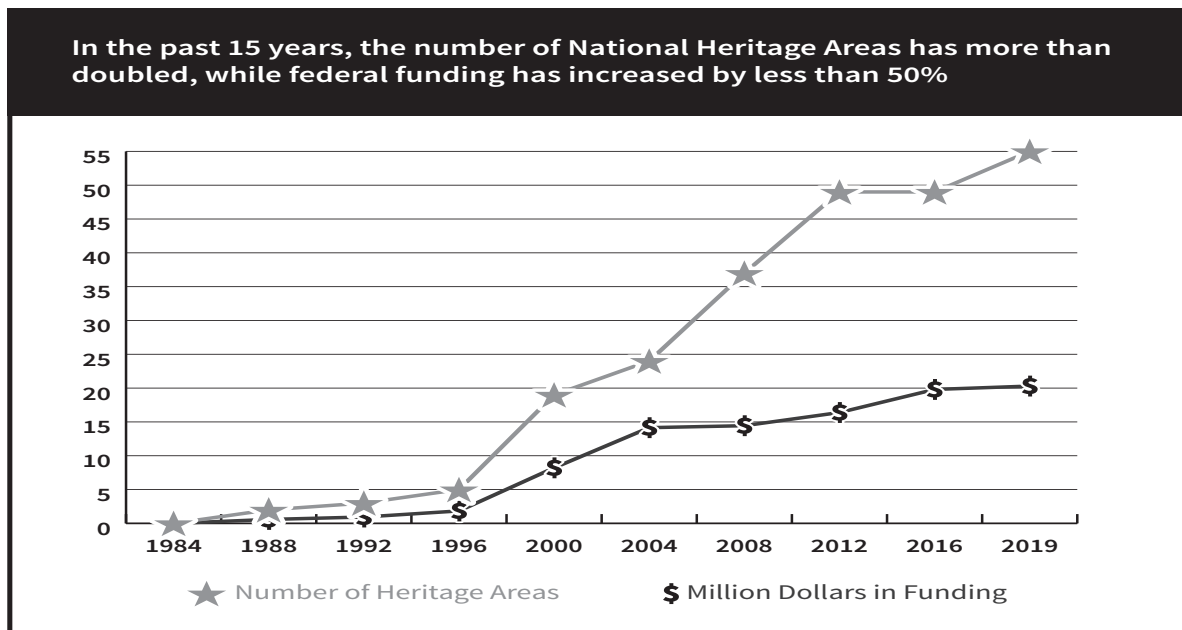
Designated by Congress, National Heritage Areas are lived-in landscapes that tell nationally important stories that honor our nation's diverse heritage through shared resources, partnerships, and direct community involvement. National Heritage Areas are catalysts in their communities. They are often located in vulnerable communities who have suffered economic setbacks due to declining industries. Utilizing a grassroots, community driven approach, National Heritage Areas work with these communities to build a new economic platform based on heritage tourism and outdoor recreation that revitalizes the economy and instill pride for the people who live there. What makes National Heritage Areas different than other federal programs is that people and partners who live within National Heritage Areas are key participants in the decision-making process. National Heritage Areas have direct impact and involvement, with communities like Akron, Ohio and Muscle Shoals, Alabama bringing the National Park Service mission out from behind the enclaves of federal lands and directly to the people. Few federal programs epitomize the democratic principles our nation was built on like National Heritage Areas. National Heritage Areas truly are of the people, by the people, and for the people.

In addition to fostering collaboration within National Heritage Areas, National Heritage Areas often collaborate with each other to address shared history or collaborative landscape conservation. An example of this is the participation by a majority of National Heritage Areas in Operation Pollination, which works with volunteers, schools, and partners in our communities to address declining pollinator populations through pledge supports that raise awareness, commitment, and engagement for this issue. The result of this multi-regional collaboration will

be focused attention on the pollinator crisis in hundreds of communities across the United States.

While the Heritage Area Program currently models the type of efficiency we need to see in more federal programs, we believe it can be modernized to better ensure long-term sustainability and savings. As the attached chart demonstrates, funding levels have not kept pace with the growth and popularity of the program. From 2004 to 2017, Congress has increased the number of National Heritage Areas by 100%. However, during the same time, funding has only increased by 33%. This has resulted in significant underfunding of the program to individual National Heritage Areas. ***It should be noted that this past month Congress passed S.47, which adds six new National Heritage Areas—further exacerbating an already underfunded program.*** To bring appropriations into alignment with the number of Congressionally-authorized National Heritage Areas, we respectfully request that federal funding be increased to \$32 million.

In closing, I hope the National Heritage Area will have your continued support. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding our program.



The following data was compiled by the National Park Service on the Impact of National Heritage Areas in 2017.

How We Spent 2017 – National Heritage Areas by the Numbers

National Heritage Areas expand on traditional conservation approaches by supporting large-scale, community-driven initiatives that engage communities in heritage preservation activities. National Heritage Area entities collaborate with stakeholders to determine how to make heritage relevant to local needs and interests using federal funds and local match. Through their work, they serve as catalysts for community and economic development. In 2017, NHAs:

- Leveraged \$50.5 million in cash and in-kind support to carry out heritage projects and program, greatly increasing the impact of the \$17.8 million in federal Heritage Partnership Program funding received.
- Engaged 2,219 formal partners and 5,227 informal partners in heritage area activities.
- Benefited from 38,061 volunteers contributing over 823,902 hours for heritage area projects – a \$19.6 million-dollar value.

Preserving our Heritage. Across the country, National Heritage Areas and their partners are reviving historic downtowns, preserving battlefields and industrial sites, and sharing our nation’s history through the arts.

- 151 historic sites and 14,342 acres of cultural landscapes preserved and maintained, including battlefields.
- 87 community development projects were carried-out, including streetscape improvement and art projects.
- 61 collections projects undertaken, including the conservation of artifacts and creation of oral histories.
- 95 historic preservation grants awarded totaling \$1.4 million.

Healthy Environment & People. Conservation activities led by National Heritage Area entities and their partners improve air and water quality and support healthy ecosystems.

- 8062 acres of land restored and maintained via invasive species removal, replanting and toxic site clean-ups.
- 49 conservation grants awarded totaling \$638,000.

Through recreational projects such as land and water trails, National Heritage Areas are improving connectivity and accessibility, creating more vibrant and healthy communities.

- 128 recreation projects undertaken.
- 908 miles of trails maintained and 37 new miles of trails developed.
- 52 recreation grants awarded totaling \$363,000.

Educating Current and Future Leaders. Through programs such as Cane River National Heritage Area’s City of Natchitoches Art Adventures Camp. National Heritage Areas and their partners are providing meaningful and inspirational connections to our nation’s heritage and exploring the qualities and skills of leadership.

- Capacity-building assistance provided to 1,316 organizations.
- 238 educational programs were offered.
- 533 grants to support educational programs were awarded totaling \$1.2 million.

The National Heritage Areas: * Denotes NHA that spans multiple states

ALABAMA: Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area **ALASKA:** Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area, **ARIZONA:** Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area **COLORADO:** Cache La Poudre National Heritage Area, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, South Park National Heritage Area **CONNECTICUT:** *Last Green Valley National Heritage Area (CT, MA), *Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (CT, MA) **FLORIDA:** *Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, NC, SC) **GEORGIA:** Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area, Augusta Canal National Heritage Area, *Gullah/Geechee National Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, NC, SC) **IOWA:** Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area **ILLINOIS:** Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area, Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor **KANSAS:** *Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (KS, MO) **LOUISIANA:** Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, Cane River National Heritage Area **MARYLAND:** Baltimore National Heritage Area, *Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (MD, PA, VA, WV) **MASSACHUSETTS:** Essex National Heritage Area, *Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (MA, NH), *John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (MA, RI) *Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor (CT, MA), *Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area (CT, MA) **MICHIGAN:** Motor Cities National Heritage Area **MISSISSIPPI:** Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area, Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area, Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area **MISSOURI:** *Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (KS, MO) **NEVADA:** *Great Basin National Heritage Area (NV, UT) **NEW JERSEY:** Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area **NEW HAMPSHIRE:** *Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (MA, NH) **NEW MEXICO:** Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area **NEW YORK:** *Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership (NY, VT), Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, Niagara Falls National Heritage Area **NORTH CAROLINA:** Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, *Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, NC, SC) **NORTH DAKOTA:** Northern Plains National Heritage Area **OHIO:** Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway, National Aviation Heritage Area **PENNSYLVANIA:** Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, *Journey to Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (MD, PA, VA, WV), Lackawanna National Heritage Area, Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, Oil Region National Heritage Area, Schuylkill River National Heritage Area, Path of Progress National Heritage Route **RHODE ISLAND:** *John H. Chafee Blackstone National Heritage Corridor (MA, RI) **SOUTH CAROLINA:** *Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, SC, NC) **TENNESSEE:** Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area **UTAH:** *Great Basin National Heritage Area (UT, NV), Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area **VERMONT:** *Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership (VT, NY) **VIRGINIA:** *Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (PA, WV, MD, VA) **WEST VIRGINIA:** *Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (PA, WV, MD, VA), Wheeling National Heritage Area, National Coal National Heritage Area

S. 47 Designated NHA's: Santa Cruz NHA (**AZ**), Maritime NHA (**WA**), Mountains to Sound NHA (**WA**) Susquehanna NHA (**PA**), Appalachian Forest NHA (**WV**), Sacramento to San Joaquin NHA (**CA**)