

S. HRG. 118–336

**THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FOR FISCAL YEAR
2025 AND PENDING LEGISLATION**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

S. 2620	S. 3534	S. 4222
S. 2742	S. 3542	S. 4227
S. 2743	S. 3543	S. 4228
S. 2784	S. 3568/H.R. 3448	S. 4259
S. 3195	S. 4129	H.R. 359
S. 3241	S. 4209	H.R. 2717
S. 3251	S. 4216	H.R. 4984
S. 3474	S. 4218	

MAY 15, 2024



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The text for each of the bills addressed in this hearing can be found on the Committee's website at: <https://www.energy.senate.gov/hearings/2024/5/national-parks-subcommittee-hearing-to-examine-the-president-s-budget-request-for-the-national-park-service-for-fiscal-year-2025-and-to-receive-testimony-on-pending-legislation>

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND PENDING LEGISLATION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2024

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:00 a.m. in Room SD-366, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Angus S. King, Jr., Chair of the Subcommittee, presiding.

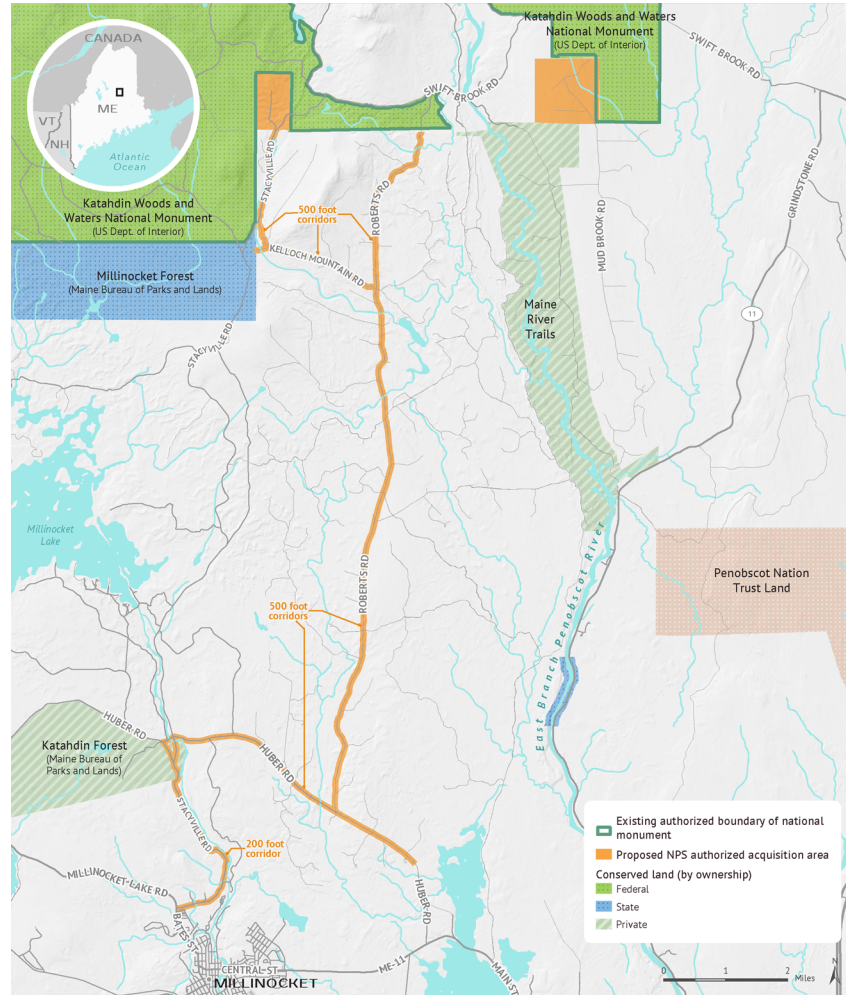
OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ANGUS S. KING, JR., U.S. SENATOR FROM MAINE

Senator KING. Good morning. We are going to start this morning with consideration of 23 different legislative proposals. Afterwards, we will have a conversation about the President's budget for Fiscal Year 2025 for the National Park Service.

I want to begin with one of the bills that we are going to be considering, which is S. 4209. It is legislation I have introduced to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. Senator Daines will remember that we looked at this bill, similar legislation, two years ago in the last Congress. As a result of that hearing, we heard a lot of feedback from the community. We have been working closely with regional stakeholders and modified the legislation significantly based on their suggestions. The result of this engagement is that instead of authorizing a 42,000-acre acquisition, this bill authorizes roughly 2,500 acres, and the change was made at the request of the Trust for Public Lands (TPL), which owns the majority of the potential addition. TPL is separately working to transfer the balance of the adjacent land to the Penobscot Nation as a working forest.

As you can see from this map, what we are really talking about here is a road that will connect the Town of Millinocket—which is the principal town and community in the region of the national monument—with the monument itself rather than the current pathway to get to the monument, which is a long, circuitous route up one side. So this would be an incredible boon to the economy of that region, and that is why I have been working so hard on this for several years.

[The map referred to follows:]



Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Authorized Acquisition Area

May 1, 2024. Copyright © Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. www.tpl.org

Senator KING. Also, since the introduction of the predecessor bill several years ago, the State of Maine has acquired an easement that is necessary for an ATV trail from Millinocket to Medway to another town in the region ensuring there will be no impact on that important east-west connection for ATVs and snowmobiles. ATVs and snowmobiles—as they are in Montana, I suspect—are a big deal in Maine and the trails are very important. So working out something with the ATV clubs in the region has been an important part of the work that we have done.

I want to introduce several letters of support into the record, including one from the Katahdin Chamber of Commerce. I also want to highlight a letter that I got from Sandra and Thomas Bell, who own the Golden Road Crossing, a local store on Millinocket Lake. They have embarked upon an expansion of their store and restaurant to be open year-round. This is a very big deal for that part of the state, and employs 28 people from the local area. They attribute the growth in their business to the increased tourism in both Baxter State Park and the Katahdin National Monument. They are supporting this legislation because not only will access to the monument from the south help to increase their business, it will also improve their guests' experience. My goal remains for this legislation to help the Katahdin region continue to grow as a vibrant outdoor recreation hub that helps diversify the region's economy while not impacting the region's revamped forest products sector.

[Letters of support for S. 4209 follow:]



May 13, 2024

Patrick T. Bond
 Senior Policy Advisor
 Office of Senator Angus S. King, Jr., Maine
 133 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Bond,

My name is Mike Smith and I'm writing to you today on behalf of the Outdoor Sport Institute to express our support of S.4209 – A bill to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the State of Maine.

OSI's mission is to empower active, resilient outdoor communities. The Katahdin Region is our headquarters, and the focal point of our collaborative approach to lift up infrastructure, resources, and local leadership around human-powered outdoor recreation.

Expanding access to Katahdin Woods and Waters along the proposed route from Millinocket will bring significant economic benefits to our region at the southern end of the national monument. Visitors to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument do not currently have a direct route to Millinocket. With its expanding hospitality offerings, Millinocket can offer visitors amenities not available elsewhere in the region. With the increase in visitation expected following the opening of Tekakapimák Visitor Contact Station in the monument, it will be important for more circulation in the region and this bill provides for that.

The expanded access will also increase connectivity among the region's many recreational offerings. The proposed route along the Staceyville, Huber, and Roberts Roads will reduce the drive-time between Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, shortening the current route by over 20 miles. As regional economic development groups coordinate efforts to brand the Katahdin region as a destination for outdoor recreation and tourism, this increased connectivity can become not only a marketing talking point, but a reality for visitors on the ground.

Thank you considering this letter and for your work to enhance the Katahdin region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Michael Smith
 Executive Director
 mike@outdoorsi.org

Thomas and Sandra Bell
Golden Road Crossing
1605 Baxter State Park Road
Millinocket, Maine 04462

May 14, 2024

Patrick T. Bond
Senior Policy Advisor
Office of Senator Angus S. King, Jr., Maine
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Bond,

Our names are [Thomas and Sandra Bell. We are writing to you today as owner of *Golden Road Crossing* to express my support of S.4209 – A bill to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the State of Maine.

We have embarked on a major expansion of our store and restaurant outside of Baxter State Park. We are now going to be open year-round and employ 28 people from the local area. Tourism has driven the growth of our business and many others. We see 60,000 guests each summer and most are interested in visiting both Baxter State Park, the North Maine Woods and the National Monument. Closer access from this southern area of the National Monument will help to increase business, but most importantly it will make the guest experience much more pleasurable and allow them to easily view both beautiful locations, Baxter State Park and the National Monument, as well as be able to experience the new visitor center with its tribute to the Wabanaki Tribe. Increased connectivity will benefit the entire region and help to better serve our guests to the area.

Expanding access to Katahdin Woods and Waters along the proposed route from Millinocket will bring significant economic benefits to our region at the southern end of the national monument. Visitors to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument do not currently have a direct route to or from Millinocket. With its expanding hospitality offerings, Millinocket can offer visitors amenities not available elsewhere in the region. With an increase in visitation expected following the opening of Tekakpimek Visitor Contact Station in the monument, it will be important for more circulation in the region and this bill provides for that.

The expanded access will also increase connectivity among the region's many recreational offerings by placing visitors close to the entrance of Baxter State Park and other north woods trails, rivers, and ponds. The proposed route along the Stacyville, Huber, and Roberts Roads will reduce the drive-time between Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, shortening the current route by over 20 miles. As regional economic development groups coordinate efforts to brand the Katahdin region as a destination for recreation and tourism, this increased connectivity can become not only a marketing talking point, but a reality for visitors and residents alike.

Thank you for considering this letter and for your efforts to enhance the Katahdin region.

Sincerely,
Thomas and Sandra Bell
Owners, Golden Road Crossing
(NWTP Corp)
goldenroadcrossing@gmail.com



May 13, 2024

Patrick T. Bond
 Senior Policy Advisor
 Office of Senator Angus S. King, Jr., Maine
 133 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Pat,

Today I'm writing to you as the President of the Katahdin Chamber of Commerce to express my support of S.4209 – a bill to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.

The Katahdin Chamber has a rich history of support for the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument as well as the first access bill. The Chamber is the leading destination marketing organization in the Katahdin region, and as such, we have continued to champion the notion that a national monument will add economic vitality to our region. Since the monument's designation, we have seen an upswing in visitors to our region, business expansion, and explosive increases in home values.

However, we have not benefitted from direct access to the monument from Millinocket in the same manner our neighbors to the north have from their towns. This access bill will rectify that.

Expanding access to Katahdin Woods and Waters along the proposed route from Millinocket will bring significant economic benefits to our region at the southern end of the national monument. Visitors to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument do not currently have a direct route to or from Millinocket. With its expanding hospitality offerings, Millinocket can offer visitors amenities not available elsewhere in the region. An increase in visitation is expected following the opening of the Tekakapimék Visitor Contact Station in the monument. This bill will address this by facilitating more circulation in the region."

The expanded access will also increase connectivity among the region's many recreational offerings by placing visitors close to the entrance of Baxter State Park and other north woods trails, rivers, and ponds. The proposed route along the Stacyville, Huber, and Roberts Roads will reduce the drive-time between Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, shortening the current route by over 20 miles. As regional economic development groups coordinate efforts to brand the Katahdin region as a destination for recreation and

tourism, this increased connectivity can become not only a marketing talking point, but a reality for visitors and residents alike.

Thank you for considering this letter and for your efforts to enhance the Katahdin region.

Sincerely,



Gail Fanjoy, President
Katahdin Chamber of Commerce



207-723-4443
1029 Central Street, Millinocket, ME 04862
www.katahdinmaine.com



Tracey Perry
 Katahdin Collaborative
 PO Box 331
 Millinocket, ME 04462

May 13, 2024

Patrick T. Bond
 Senior Policy Advisor
 Office of Senator Angus S. King, Jr., Maine
 133 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Bond,

I'm writing to you today on behalf of the Katahdin Collaborative to express our strong support for S.4209 – A bill to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the State of Maine.

The Katahdin Collaborative is a collective endeavor that brings together diverse partners, including community members, businesses, non-profit organizations, and municipalities, to collaboratively drive the revitalization of the Katahdin region. Our mission is to create a positive environment that facilitates communication, leverages resources, and nurtures collaboration towards lasting positive systemic change.

Expanding access to Katahdin Woods and Waters along the proposed route from Millinocket will bring significant economic benefits to our region at the southern end of the national monument. Visitors to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument do not currently have a direct route to Millinocket. With its expanding hospitality offerings, Millinocket can offer visitors amenities not available elsewhere in the region. With an increase in visitation expected following the opening of Tekakqimëk Visitor Contact Station in the monument, it will be important for more circulation in the region, and this bill provides for that.

The expanded access will also increase connectivity among the region's many recreational offerings. The proposed route along the Stacyville, Huber, and Roberts Roads will reduce the drive-time between Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, shortening the current route by over 20 miles. As regional entrepreneurial/economic development groups coordinate efforts to brand the Katahdin region as a destination for outdoor recreation and tourism, this increased connectivity can become not only a marketing talking point but a reality for visitors on the ground.

Thank you for considering this letter and for your work to enhance the Katahdin region. With Penobscot ancestry running through my veins, I am deeply inspired by the support from the Penobscot Nation, as well as the hope of fostering a mutually beneficial revitalization of these lands that hold such profound cultural

significance. We firmly believe that this bill will play a pivotal role in supporting our collective efforts to revitalize the region and unlock its full potential as a premier destination for outdoor enthusiasts, cultural and environmental tourism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracey Perry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tracey" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Perry".

Tracey Perry
Initiatives Director, Katahdin Collaborative
director@katahdincollaborative.org

Bruce D. McLean
North Woods Real Estate
FSC Subway, LLC
80 Penobscot Ave
Millinocket, Maine 04462

May 14, 2024

Patrick T. Bond
Senior Policy Advisor
Office of Senator Angus S. King, Jr., Maine
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Bond,

I'm writing to you today as owner of the *Millinocket Subway* and a broker with the *North Woods Real Estate* to express my support of S.4209 – A bill to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the State of Maine.

Currently, the traffic into the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument enters and exits in Stacyville, Maine, which is far enough away from Millinocket to have little or no impact on my business. Having a southern entrance would bring visitors right by my front door, which would make a huge difference for our store. Having more traffic coming through the communities of Medway, East Millinocket and Millinocket will also help generate interest from people who might decide that our region is a great place to invest creating a positive impact on our real estate market as well.

Expanding access to Katahdin Woods and Waters along the proposed route from Millinocket will bring significant economic benefits to our region at the southern end of the national monument. Visitors to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument do not currently have a direct route to or from Millinocket. With its expanding hospitality offerings, Millinocket can offer visitors amenities not available elsewhere in the region. With an increase in visitation expected following the opening of Tekakapimək Visitor Contact Station in the monument, it will be important for more circulation in the region and this bill provides for that.

The expanded access will also increase connectivity among the region's many recreational offerings by placing visitors close to the entrance of Baxter State Park and other north woods trails, rivers, and ponds. The proposed route along the Stacyville, Huber, and Roberts Roads will reduce the drive-time between Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, shortening the current route by over 20 miles. As regional economic development groups coordinate efforts to brand the Katahdin region as a destination for recreation and tourism, this increased connectivity can become not only a marketing talking point, but a reality for visitors and residents alike.

Thank you for considering this letter and for your efforts to enhance the Katahdin region.

Sincerely,

Bruce D. McLean
Owner, FSC Subway, LLC
Associate Broker, North Woods Real Estate
bmclean.res@gmail.com

From: Randy Jackson <jacksonrandy106@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 13, 2024 5:57 PM
To: Bond, Patrick (King)
Subject: S.4209

Dear Senator King,

Thank you for your introduction of Bill S.4209.

A bill that will provide Southern access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument via a Millinocket region connection.

I sit on several nonprofit boards mostly related to economic drivers for Millinocket. One of which is the Katahdin Woods And Waters National Scenic Byway for which we were awarded national recognition In March.

Creating a southern access to Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument will be another economic driver for our area. During the summer months our area generates thousands of vehicles going up through to Baxter State Park alone. In creating a southern access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument it will generate even more traffic thereby increasing the need for lodging, overnight stays and the like.

While the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument and the Katahdin Woods And Waters scenic byway have not reached their visitor potential putting in infrastructure such as this access road will pay off in the future.

We must prepare for our future and provide a much needed access for people to enjoy all the work being done in our area.

Senator King, please don't miss the opening of Tekapimek visitors center this summer. This will be an international draw in and of itself to the KWWNM.

Thank you for your support of our region. The southern access from the Millinocket region to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument will be an economic driver for us.

Best,
Randy D Jackson
Cell 207-249-5786

Senator KING. In addition to the Katahdin bill that I mentioned, we are considering legislation to rename the Acadia Visitor Center after former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who is one of the heroes in Maine of the last generation. We also have a proposal to name a visitor center after former Senator Dianne Feinstein, and our colleague Senator Carper. We are also here about a proposal to establish Georgia's first national park, something Senator Ossoff has spoken to me about, and a bill led by Senators Lankford and Booker, to establish the Historic Greenwood District-Black Wall Street National Monument in Tulsa, telling the story of a horrific massacre that needs to be remembered as part of our country's history.

The final bill I want to specifically mention is legislation regarding the old RFK Stadium campus in Washington, DC. This is a bill that has already passed the House and we have received testimony in support from Mayor Bowser. I have no objections to this bill, nor to the idea of using the site for a future sports stadium. However, I recognize that my Vice Chair has specific issues that must be addressed before this bill can move forward, and I hope to work with him to find a resolution.

For those in attendance today, I want to note that the Subcommittee will keep the record open on all bills considered here today, allowing those who wish to submit statements of support or opposition to any of the bills to be included in the official record.

In addition to legislation, we are also going to examine the Park Service's budget request. As this Committee knows well, in recent years I have grown frustrated with an underfunding of routine maintenance by the Administrations of both parties. I was just at a national park last week in Antietam, Maryland, with a bipartisan group of my colleagues, and the staff talked about their innovative use of maintenance action teams and efforts to buy down maintenance needs and using materials that last longer and require less periodic maintenance over the design life. Of course, we funded a great deal of deferred maintenance in the Great American Outdoors Act, one of the signal achievements of the last several years of this Congress, but we cannot keep digging the deferred maintenance hole and expect a Great American Outdoors Act to come along every four or five years. So I hope to work with the Administration, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Park Service on being sure that there is an adequate maintenance budget for these gems across the country.

While my recent focus has been on the maintenance budget, we also need to talk about staffing of our national parks. As our visitation has gone up rather dramatically in the last five years, staffing has not kept pace. If we want people to have a positive experience at our national parks, we have to have adequate staff. We have to have people that can deal with visitors and the volume of visitors that we are seeing so that they can continue to enjoy and learn from those spaces. As frontline national park managers in the green and gray uniforms and the famous hats that help bring history alive and keep visitors safe, this budget impacts their lives and thus the visitor experience. I worry that our frontline workers, our frontline employees, are over-stretched, as head count has not

kept up with visitation. I want to acknowledge that the budget does attempt to increase these staffing levels.

Now I would like to recognize Vice Chairman Daines for his opening statement. Following his remarks, I will recognize members of the Committee or other Senators who wish to make a statement about their bills that are on the agenda, followed by any members not on the Committee who seek to make a statement. Then, we will turn to our witness, Mr. Caldwell, for his opening statement.

Vice Chair Daines.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE DAINES,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator DAINES. Chairman King, thank you.

Today's legislative hearing focuses on 23 largely parochial bills, as well as the National Park Service's Fiscal Year 2025 budget. I am going to defer my normal introduction for later in the hearing, as I would like to focus on an important issue that is before us here today. At today's hearing we have H.R. 4984, the D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act. This bill transfers the administration over the RFK Memorial Stadium campus from the Park Service to the District of Columbia for 99 years. The purpose of this transfer is for the development of a new stadium, as well as other commercial and residential development. Now, you might ask why does a Montana Senator have a specific interest in this bill? Well, today is about righting a wrong. Specifically, my goal is for the Washington Commanders to honor the pride, the history, and the heritage of the Blackfeet Tribe, who are my constituents in Montana, for the Tribe's contributions to the team's legacy.

Let me tell you the story. Behind me is a photograph from the 1960s of Blackie Wetzel and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. Blackie Wetzel was a member of the Blackfeet Nation in Montana and served his people and the country in many roles throughout his life, including as Chairman of the Blackfeet Tribe, and he was President of the National Congress of American Indians. In 1971, Blackie met with George Herbert Allen, who was then the head coach and general manager of the Washington Redskins. Knowing that Coach Allen admired and supported Native Americans, Blackie Wetzel encouraged him to replace the team's "R" logo with something that represented Indian Country. Blackie brought Coach Allen designs based off of prominent Native American figures, including Blackfeet Chief Two Guns White Calf. And behind me, you will see the logo and the photo of Chief Two Guns White Calf. The clear depiction of Chief Two Guns White Calf is beyond dispute.

[The photos and logo referred to follow:]



Walter Wetzel, middle, speaks with Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. Wetzel, former president of the National Congress of American Indians, is responsible for the now retired Washington Redskins logo.

(Francis Miller/The LIFE Picture Collection Via Getty Images)
<https://sports.yahoo.com/family-of-walter-wetzel-native-american-who-created-redskins-logo-mixed-on-its-retirement-22181054.html>



Senator DAINES. On behalf of the team, Coach Allen adopted the new iconic logo that is placed prominently on this beautiful helmet that I received from former players. I am proud to display it here today.

[A photo of the helmet mentioned appears below:]



Senator DAINES. Make no mistake—this logo was inspired and envisioned by Wetzel as a tribute to Native Americans. It is not a caricature. It is a depiction of pride, of strength, of courage, of honor. In fact, to quote Blackie Wetzel from 2002, he said, “It made us all so proud to have an Indian on a big-time team.” And I would add that historically, as the son of a Montana U.S. Marine, do you realize Native Americans serve our country in uniform at the highest percentage per capita of any ethnic group? They are truly warriors for our country.

Now that you know the history, I would like to talk about the future. First, let me be clear. I am not calling for the return of the former team name, which has become increasingly controversial, especially in Indian Country, but the logo itself remains a point of pride for many in Indian Country, and specifically for the Wetzel family. I was able to speak last night with Ryan Wetzel, who is the grandson of Blackie Wetzel, who was out, in fact, in his backyard last night doing some remodeling work on a patio just outside of Hamilton, Montana. The failure to properly honor the pride and the history embodied by this iconic logo must be made right by both the team’s new ownership and the NFL. Doing so would honor the Blackfeet Tribe, my constituents in Montana. Showing proper recognition to the contributions of Native Americans is also fitting for our capital region, as the National Parks website points out, “our nation’s capital is full of American Indian heritage.” Simply look outside at the names in the region. For example, the Potomac River, the Quantico Marine Corps Base, and the Chesapeake Bay Watershed that spans much of the geographical region that makes up Washington’s fan base.

What I am demanding here is very straightforward—that the new team leadership and the NFL sit down with the Wetzel family, sit down with the Blackfeet, sit down with tribal leaders, and find a way to properly honor the history of the logo and the heritage of our Tribal Nations and to rededicate the organization as an advocate for Indian Country. That effort might take several forms. It might result in restoring the logo with a new team name that is supported by tribal leaders and will bring unity across communities. It could also be telling the story of the logo’s connection to the Wetzel family and honoring the Native communities it represents. When I spoke with Ryan Wetzel last night, we recalled a meeting I had with his dad, Don Wetzel, here in Washington, DC, talking about this very issue. That was back in 2021. Don died not long afterwards. And Ryan just smiled. You could hear his smile over the phone. He said, “My dad would be thrilled to think that we are having this discussion today in Washington in honoring the legacy of this logo.” It could be resuming merchandise sales featuring the logo and maybe using a portion of the proceeds to bring awareness to missing and murdered indigenous women and other tribal causes. For example, on the NFL website you can buy a retro Houston Oilers jersey with the old logo, but nowhere on the website can you find merchandise with this logo for sale.

The new owners and the NFL have the opportunity to heal old wounds, work with families, and enter into a new era. They can properly honor the heritage of the Wetzel family, the Blackfeet Tribe, and Native Americans across our country. They could honor

former players and the community as a whole. There are a lot of former players that have signed this helmet. The team can be a beacon of light for these communities, but until I see meaningful actions that satisfy the Wetzel family and other tribal stakeholders, I cannot support this legislation. With that, Mr. Chairman, I have a number of letters, including one from Ryan Wetzel and one from the Montana Native Women's Coalition, a few news stories, and in fact, an excerpt from *George Allen: A Football Life* by Mike Richman that I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record.

Senator KING. Without objection.

[Letters and items for the record follow:]

Dear Washington Commanders Organization,

5/13/24

My grandfather is Blackie Wetzel, the Blackfeet Tribal Leader who blessed the Washington Franchise with the Blackfeet profile that was used for nearly 50 years. He was a proud and active supporter of the team up until his passing in 2003.

In his footsteps, I continue to strive to be like him. I strive to make sure that his legacy is front and center to everything he has accomplished as a political and tribal leader. I continue to promote his story to all national leaders. I share my grandfather's connection with the NFL and the Washington Commanders Organization as a proud part of his amazing accomplishments.

As mentioned, many times in previous years, my grandfather's logo has been a part of the NFL for nearly 50 years. To put that into perspective; in the 100 years of the National Football League's existence, my grandfather's logo has been a part of it for nearly half the time. For half a century the proud face of a Blackfeet Native American warrior was honored in representation of the Red Nation.

My father Don Wetzel Sr. who passed in March of 2023, was striving to make sure, with the changes, that Blackie be honored and remember for all the years the logo was used to represent the team. This effort continues with me as a promise to my late father.

Despite the controversy, there are many more supporters that exist from the logo. It reaches far and wide across the world. With that support comes honor and appreciation for the amazing story and heritage of my family, my tribe, and our people. There is too much history with the logo which includes multiple championships, countless hall of fame coaches and players, and the cultural connection to simply forget.

With my blessing, I ask that the new owners share my grandfather's story and the story behind the logo and continue to stay an active supporter of the Native American communities as my grandfather envisioned it to be. I request the organization continue the conversation with myself to use the logo in some way to honor the wonderful legacy of the former Washington Redskins Nation.

Respectfully,



Ryan H Wetzel

Grandson of Blackie Wetzel
406-698-4864

CC: Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Montana Native Women's Coalition
15 North 26th Street, Suite 201
Billings, MT 59101
Ph. 406-969-2552
Fax. 406-894-2513

Honorable Senator Steve Daines
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Daines:

It pleases me that our Montana senatorial delegation has been active in the important issues relating to murdered and the still missing native women and girls of this nation, including supporting the annual MMIW/G Awareness Day. It also pleases me that the federal government has included our male relatives (MMIP) in its efforts to mitigate the numbers of these awful crimes and the impacts upon tribal families and communities. Operation Lady Justice was a good start and with the information and other data gathered from families, tribes, friends, and law enforcement, I am extremely hopeful that effective strategies will be developed as a result.

I have served for a total of nine years (via three separate periods) as a member of the Blackfeet Tribal Legal Department. In the early 1990s, I learned from my colleagues and friends within the Tribe that a respected elder tribal member, Blackie Wetzel, had designed a logo for a professional football team in the Washington DC area. The logo was based upon the portrait of an important Blackfeet chief, Two Guns White Calf. I knew that Mr. Wetzel's logo was eventually replaced by a new one, "W", for the Commanders when the team took on a new mascot and name. Therefore, I do not believe that the Wetzel logo is in current use.

Native peoples consider their elders to be tribal treasures. Therefore, upon the passing of Mr. Wetzel, the Wetzel family and the Blackfeet Tribe lost one of its treasures. I have since learned that the family and the Tribe seek to have use of the logo designed by Mr. Wetzel. I have also learned that that the family and the Tribe are in discussions with the Commander's owner regarding this subject. When I first learned of this matter, it pleased me that family and the Tribe's proposed use of the logo could be an opportunity to bring more awareness to MMIP and address even further strategies for combatting this epidemic.

As native people with similar histories, we know that our historical leaders thought of us and loved us, their descendants. This love transcends the many generations to those of us who live in this contemporary era. Concerns for us were paramount in their decisions on how to best safeguard us, their children who were yet to come.

It would have been an unspeakable terror for those leaders to know that many, many of their descendants would have been targeted with acts resulting in MMIP. I have no doubt that Chief Two Guns White Calf would have done anything at all to prevent those acts, including the use of his portrait.

The use of the logo-portrait by the family and the Tribe in a manner to combat MMIP is a humble and selfless endeavor. In this regard, Senator Daines, I would encourage you to help the parties and stakeholders come to a unified plan of action regarding the use of the logo-portrait. Thank you for your deep interest herein and efforts on the behalf of our state and the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jean Bearcrane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jean" and last name "Bearcrane" clearly legible.

Jean Bearcrane
Executive Director

Great Falls Tribune

Who was Walter 'Blackie' Wetzel, the Blackfeet man behind the Washington Football Team's logo?

By: Nora Mabie

Published July 23, 2020



Figure 1: Walter "Blackie" Wetzel (right) attends a Washington Football Team game with his son Lance. Courtesy of Lance Wetzel

The late Walter "Blackie" Wetzel is perhaps best known for designing the Washington, D.C. NFL team's logo.

Responding to mounting pressure from investors, corporations and protesters, the team announced last week it would change its name from, "Redskins," a racial slur, and retire the logo that Blackie, a Blackfeet man, designed in the 1970s.

The team announced Thursday that pending the adoption of a new name, it will temporarily be called the Washington Football Team.

But Blackie's legacy extends far beyond a logo.

Former councilman and chairman of the Blackfeet Nation and president of the National Congress of American Indians, Blackie was a fierce advocate for Indigenous people.

Native Americans nationwide may remember him for his jobs and housing programs, for denouncing assimilation policies or for his advocacy on behalf of "landless Indians," who did not have a land base.

Many members of the Blackfeet Nation remember Blackie as a charismatic leader who elevated Indigenous representation. His family remembers him as an inspiration. Devoted to prayer and to his cause, family members revere Blackie for his kindness, passion and determination.



Who was Blackie Wetzel?



Figure 2: Walter "Blackie" Wetzel stands with his wife Doris in Browning. Courtesy of Lance Wetzel

Blackie was born near Cut Bank Creek on the Blackfeet Reservation on June 27, 1915.

A talented boxer, track runner and football player, he lettered in all three sports at the University of Montana. It was at the Missoula university that Blackie studied under then-history professor Mike Mansfield, who later served as a congressman and senator for Montana.

Blackie married Doris Barlow in 1938, and together they raised nine children, Marlen, Bill, Helen, Walt, Don, Mike, Sharon, Christine and Lance.

Blackie was elected to the tribal council in 1950 and elected chairman six years later. He became the first Blackfeet president of the National Congress of American Indians in 1960.

Blackie later worked for the U.S. Department of Labor, where he traveled to Indigenous communities nationwide, promoting jobs and housing programs to alleviate unemployment, wealth disparities and overcrowding.

"In talking to tribal leaders, I find they are extremely interested in providing permanent employment for their people – employment without exploitation

and employment which is in agreement with the policies of the tribal leadership," Blackie told the Tribune in 1977.

Through various programs, Blackie secured funding to bring modern housing to reservations.

Blackie's son, Lance Wetzel, said Blackie fought against federal policies that aimed to terminate tribes.

"He felt strongly about achieving self-determination without termination. His big thing was to give Indians more control over their lands and resources. He talked about jurisdiction issues, upholding treaty obligations, encouraging Indian involvement in the development of policy and promoting tribal self-government," said Lance, adding that many of the same issues exist today.

In the early 1970s, Blackie lived in Washington, D.C., where he continued to advocate for Native Americans — this time through representation.

In his proposed logo design for the Washington Football Team, Blackie presented a composite of Native American photographs, including one of the early 20th century Blackfeet Chief Two Guns White Calf.

While the NFL team's name has long been controversial, as it's linked to an era of violence against Native Americans, Blackie's family members say his logo was intended to increase representation, bringing Indigenous accomplishments, pride and challenges to the national stage.



Figure 3: Walter "Blackie" Wetzel, a Blackfeet leader, stands with Robert F. Kennedy. Courtesy of Lance Wetzel

The Washington Football Team's logo

Following the Washington Football Team's announcement to retire its name and logo, Blackie's grandson, Don Wetzel, Jr. wrote in a guest column for the Great Falls Tribune that "contrary to popular belief, not all Blackfeet people — or, for that matter, all people with the name Wetzel—share the same opinion."

Like many of Blackie's descendants, Don takes pride in the logo. In his guest column, he argues the NFL team did not exploit the image at Blackie's expense, but rather that his grandfather "pulled the coup of the century" by using the NFL team's status and fame to elevate Blackfeet leaders, affirming that "Indians are proud of Indians."

Another grandson, Bill Wetzel, wrote in a guest column the conflation with a racial slur had always bothered him.

"My wish is in the future we can concentrate on those much more important, and less polarizing, accomplishments in his legacy," Bill wrote.

Grandson Justin Wetzel, 40, said he was disappointed by the "lack of humility" and absence of an apology in the team's press release, which was five sentences long, about its name change.

"On July 3rd, we announced the commencement of a thorough review of the team's name. ... Today, we are announcing we will be retiring the Redskins name and logo upon completion of this review," reads the July 13 release.

Justin said he was also frustrated that the team's Original Americans Foundation, an organization that is supposed to provide resources and opportunities for tribes, had not distributed funds in 2019.

"We aren't looking for handouts, but these programs and grant money could have really helped Native communities. Unfortunately, it appears to be just another broken promise, one more broken agreement," he said.



Figure 4: Justin Wetzel recently worked as an assistant coach in the NBA G League. He aspires to advance his grandfather's legacy by increasing Indigenous representation in the professional sports world. Courtesy of Justin Wetzel

Justin said the logo and name change has brought national attention to Indigenous people. But rather than discuss the logo, Justin hopes to redirect the growing conversation to other issues in Indian Country.

"Maybe for this split second in time when the nation is paying attention, we can talk about other issues, issues my grandfather would want us to look at," he said.

Justin said as the nation battles economic, health and race-related crises, Native Americans are disproportionately affected by each issue.

"COVID-19 has the highest rate of infection among tribes; the death rate from police is high for Native Americans, we have a high unemployment rate, violence against women is rampant," he said. "We are not helpless and hopeless, but we are impacted by the same issues that concern everyone, just impacted at the highest rates."

'I followed in Blackie's footsteps:' Lasting legacy

In his advocacy, Blackie inspired future Blackfeet leaders. Chief of the Blackfeet Nation Earl Old Person, 91, said he looked up to Blackie.

"I followed in Blackie's footsteps," Old Person said, adding that Blackie inspired him to become a councilman, chairman and president of the National Congress of American Indians, as well.



Figure 5: Blackfeet Nation, Earl Old Person said he followed in Blackie Wetzel's footsteps. Tribune File Photo

Old Person said because Blackie earned respect from tribal members as well as leaders in Washington, he was able to "relay messages from our people to D.C. to inspire change."

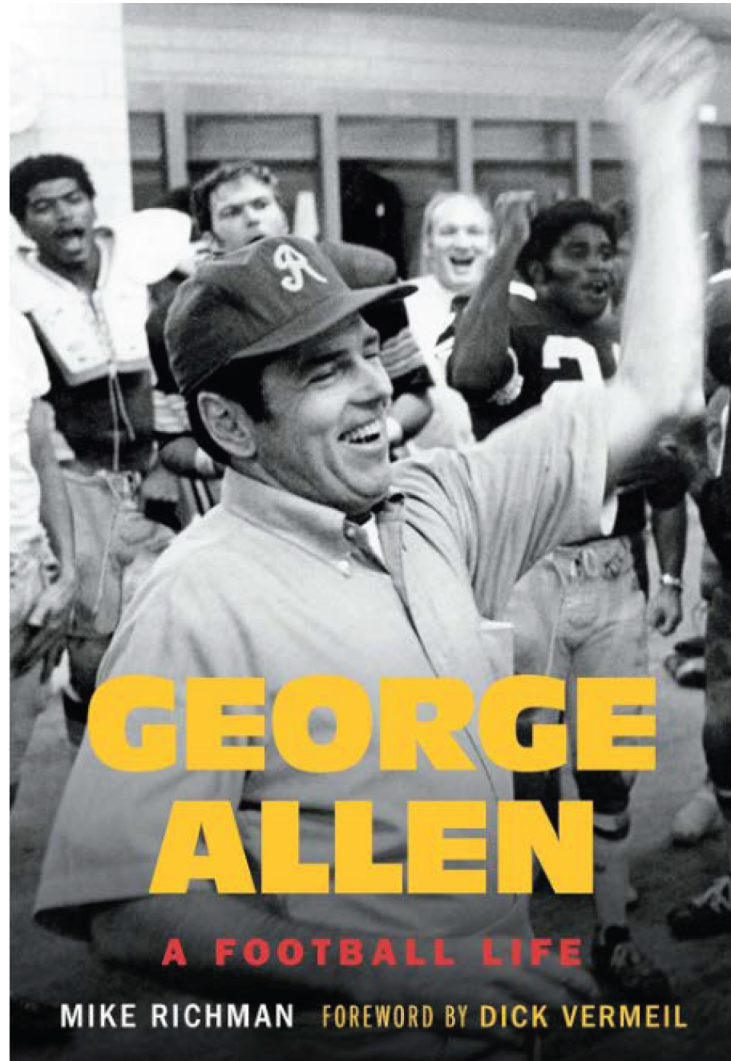
Just as Blackie worked to elevate Indigenous representation in the sports world, his grandson Justin Wetzel, who recently worked for the Milwaukee Bucks' affiliate in the NBA's G League, was the first Native American to draft another Native American to play professional basketball with his 2007 draft pick of Mike Chavez.

"That's something I'm proud of. It's a step forward, and when talking about Blackie's legacy, elevating the status of American Indians is progress. What I'd love to see next is a Native American owner of a professional sports team. That's how we need to start thinking," Justin said.

Lance said when Blackie received good news, he would often say, "Well, how about that?"

Though tribes still face many of the challenges Blackie fought to alleviate, members of the Wetzel family agree that there has been great progress.

"Sometimes, when there's a victory, like a Supreme Court decision supporting tribes or something, I picture my dad with a big ol' smile, saying 'Well, how about that?'" Lance said.



refreshed and tanned after a vacation in California. But he wasn't about to let his players relax: twenty-seven straight days of brutal two-a-day practices in the heat and humidity. Terry Hermeling, then in his first season as a starting offensive tackle, sounded incredulous about Allen's decision to put his players through such a grueling stretch. "They were three hours long, morning and afternoon, without a letup," he recalled. "That has to be a record. Twenty-seven straight days of two-a-day practices and night meetings without a day off."⁷⁸

Two team captains, Diton Talbert and Len Hauss, agreed to lead a revolt that involved giving Allen the silent treatment during a Friday morning practice. "Allen would start practice by walking around, clapping, getting everyone pumped up," Hermeling recalled. "Talbert and Hauss came to everybody and said, 'Silence when he starts clapping and jumping around. We want silence.' We started out with jumping jacks and did our warm-ups and broke into groups. We gave him the silent treatment. He got the message. I'll never forget, nobody made any gestures as we went through the practice. We just stayed as quiet as we could. After the practice, he pulled everybody together and basically acknowledged our silence and gave us the weekend off. Everybody went absolutely crazy and just hauled ass screaming and yelling to the locker room."

The celebration was premature. According to Hermeling, Allen instructed his security guard, Ed "Double O" Boynton, to get the players out of the locker room because they needed to run wind sprints. "That was just absolutely nuts," Hermeling said. "But that's the kind of guy he was. He was very meticulous with detail. [Afterward], we all took off and went to DC for the weekend and had a great time."

One of the most compelling stories in training camp involved the top two Redskins quarterbacks: Kilmer and Jurgensen. Allen rewarded Kilmer for his bravura 1971 performance by essentially tapping him as the starter entering camp. Kilmer had rescued the Redskins after Jurgensen separated his shoulder in the preseason. He started eight of the team's nine wins and threw for thirteen touchdowns and more than 2,200 yards, with a 54 percent completion rate, to finish as one of the NFC's top quarterbacks.

Thus, no true competition existed for the starting role. But all eyes were on Sonny and Billy as they split playing time in the exhibition games, with Kilmer playing the first half of all six games and Jurgensen nearly all of the second. Jurgensen completed a greater percentage of his passes than Kilmer, but both threw for six touchdowns. Most important, in Allen's

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eyes, was that Kilmer did nothing to justify losing the starting role. He departed at halftime with the Redskins in the lead in five of the six games.

Allen believed he had the best one-two quarterback combo in the league, one reason the '71 season looked so promising in DC. But he declared himself a "one quarterback man," meaning he had no plans of rotating quarterbacks like Tom Landry did in Dallas with Craig Morton and Roger Staubach. Kilmer was undoubtedly his man. "There's something about him," Allen said with the regular season just days away. "I don't know if it's charisma or whatever. It's a fierce determination to lead and an ability to win. Those are great qualities."⁷⁹

It was odd to see a healthy Sonny Jurgensen, a Redskins icon and the NFC's all-time active passing leader, warm the bench.⁸⁰ After Allen told reporters Jurgensen needed to "work" to make the team,⁸¹ he showed greater self-discipline than in past years, dropping his weight below two hundred for the first time since '66 and refusing to stay out late and consume alcoholic drinks. *Sports Illustrated* ran an article on the slimmed-down Jurgensen headlined "When You're No. 2, You Diet."⁸² Allen's decision to pick Billy over Sonny marked the genesis of a Redskins quarterback controversy that intensified in the coming weeks.

In '72 the Redskins also looked different in uniform design: maroon helmets instead of gold, with a new logo of an American Indian warrior. The logo replaced the R that Vince Lombardi had pushed for to resemble the G on the Packers' gold helmets. A prominent Native American, Walter "Blackie" Wetzel, envisioned the new logo. A fierce advocate for Native peoples and once the tribal chairman for the Blackfeet Nation in Montana, one of the largest Native reservations in the country, as well as president of the influential National Congress of American Indians, Wetzel worked with Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson and many lawmakers to promote the welfare of Indian communities.⁸³ During his time in the nation's capital, he became a true Redskins fan.⁸⁴ In 1971 he approached Allen about replacing the R on the helmet. "From what I understand, Wetzel said, 'We don't like the R on the helmet,'" George Felix Allen explained. "So my father said, 'If you don't like the R, what would you like? Make a suggestion.' So he went back to Montana and met with his council and other tribes."⁸⁵

Wetzel presented photos of Native Americans in full headdress, including one of former Blackfeet chief John Two Guns White calf, who pro-

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jected the look of a warrior and is often cited as the model for the U.S. Indian head buffalo nickel that was minted in 1913. Allen and the Redskins most admired the image of "Two Guns White Wolf," which, starting in 1972, adorned Redskins helmets for nearly half a century. (Under pressure from critics who argued that the team's name was a slur toward Native Americans, owner Dan Snyder retired the name and longtime logo in 2020. The team is now known as the Commanders.)

Allen appreciated the proud tradition of Native Americans. He took an interest in Native American history during his first college coaching stint at Morningside in Iowa (1948–50) and came to revere one leader more than any other: Chief Red Cloud. Red Cloud led the Oglala Sioux from the 1860s until his death in 1909 on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. He opposed white westward expansion and is best remembered for leading a two-year battle against U.S. government soldiers in the 1860s, a battle aimed at protecting Indian land in Montana and Wyoming. One of the most historic phases of that battle, which became known as Red Cloud's War, was the 1866 Fetterman massacre in Wyoming. Red Cloud combined forces with Crazy Horse, a fellow Oglala, and some two thousand of their warriors ambushed and slaughtered eighty-one U.S. soldiers in the U.S. Army's worst defeat in the West until the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.

In his office at Redskin Park, George Allen displayed a plaque inscribed with Red Cloud's appeal to the Great Spirit, which is sometimes called Wakan Tanka, the Supreme Being and creator of the Lakota Sioux: "Great Spirit, grant that I may not criticize my neighbor until I have walked a mile in his moccasins."⁹⁶

Allen named a philanthropy after Chief Red Cloud. In 1965, while serving as the Bears' defensive coordinator, he co-founded the Red Cloud Athletic Fund with Bears linebacker Bill George and Detroit Tigers pitcher Dizzy Trout.⁹⁷ This came after he had witnessed the despair on Pine Ridge, one of the most impoverished reservations in the country. A coach on the reservation, Gus Nimitz, had asked him for discarded Bears equipment. Allen responded by taking new athletic equipment from Montgomery Ward to the reservation but was "distressed when he observed that the youngsters did not even have moccasins," Dave Brady of the *Washington Post* wrote in 1971.⁹⁸ Allen sat on Montgomery Ward's sports advisory board at the time.

Profits from an annual banquet hosted by the Chicago-based Red Cloud Athletic Club went toward providing athletic equipment and building a

gym for kids on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Over the next decade, the banquet raised more than \$500,000 for athletic equipment and other aid to Indian youth. The Oglala Sioux tribe reciprocated by naming Allen an honorary chief.

When coaching the Redskins, Allen collaborated with the Touchdown Club in DC to start a similar effort that would raise college scholarship funds for Indian youth. The first scholarship was presented in 1974 to a teenager on the Pine Ridge Reservation so he could attend Yankton College in South Dakota.⁹⁹ Allen also arranged at the end of every season for the Redskins to send used sweatshirts, shoes, and other clothing to that reservation.¹⁰⁰

Joe Huske was a two-time president of the Red Cloud Athletic Club and a chair of its board of directors. He said once Allen became associated with the Red Cloud fund, the group put on the biggest sports banquet of the year in Chicago. "We used to get eight hundred to a thousand people just like that," he recalled. "We could get anything. When Oakland won the Super Bowl [in the '76 season], we asked Allen to make a phone call. He had a ball signed by the Raiders delivered to my office for us to raffle off. We'd get \$2,000 for the ball. That's a lot of money to raise just for a lousy football!"¹⁰¹

Huske also spoke glowingly about the extraordinary contributions that Allen made for needy American Indian children. "Boy, what he did for those Indian kids," he said. "That's real poverty. I grew up on the South Side of Chicago. That's poverty, too. But nothing like the reservation. The kids on the reservation had a chance because they had no chance before. When the state board says you can't play football or basketball, that you're not up to code . . . he didn't like that. He'd say, 'Joe, take care of that.' And I'd do it."¹⁰²

Upon approaching the Redskins in 1971, Walter "Blackie" Werzel "undoubtedly" knew of Allen's efforts to help American Indians, especially those on the Pine Ridge Reservation, according to George Felix Allen. "I know my father had an affinity and admiration for Native Americans and wanted to help them so they could have better opportunities in life," he said.¹⁰³ In a 1976 speech marking America's two-hundredth birthday, Allen called for American Indians to have their own state, "not as a place to keep him apart from us, but as a place in which he can reconstitute his great nations and from which he can stand in dignity."¹⁰⁴

Senator DAINES. Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I turn it back to you and look forward to the discussion.

Senator KING. Thank you very much for that eloquent statement, Senator Daines, and I look forward to working with you. I understand there has already been a meeting between some of the interested parties here and the new Washington ownership. Is that correct?

Senator DAINES. There has been a meeting.

Senator KING. A meeting. Okay, good.

Well, I look forward to working with you on that. I cannot help but reflect when Edward Bennett Williams let George Allen go as the coach of the team, he had the immortal quote, "I gave him an unlimited budget and he exceeded it." I have often thought of that quote.

I did want to mention that we have in attendance today, Seth Clark, the Macon-Bibb County Mayor Pro Tempore and Executive Director of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative, which we are going to be discussing later, and Tracie Revis, a citizen and former Chief of Staff of the Muscogee Creek Nation, Director of Advocacy for the National Park and Preserve Initiative. Seth and Tracie have been leading this effort at the local level for years, and their contributions to this legislation have been invaluable in ensuring that both local interests and the Tribe's voice have been represented adequately through this process, and I commend Senator Ossoff for bringing this bill forward.

Mr. Caldwell.

Oh, we are going to do the advocates first? Oh.

I'm sorry. We will start with Senator Van Hollen. I think.

Senator Padilla.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you. Coming to Committee pays dividends.

[Laughter.]

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ALEX PADILLA,
U.S. SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA**

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I also want to thank you for including three of my bills in this hearing. Three of my bills that would impact, for the better, the management of the California deserts, which our dear friend and colleague, the late Senator Feinstein championed like no one else.

While so many of California's public lands and waters have been preserved for future generations thanks to the singular drive and leadership of Senator Feinstein, she had a very special place in her heart for the California desert. Senator Feinstein is widely regarded as our greatest protector of the California desert. She would often discuss her fond childhood memories of the desert where she would ride horseback and marvel at the way the light and shadows and colors of the desert played off one another to illuminate the landscape. I think in many ways that inspires some of her watercolors that she was known for during her time here in the Senate. She especially loved the desert tortoise, and she proudly showed off a poster in her office of a majestic tortoise on the very land that she had worked hard to protect. There is one tortoise that she dubbed the "405." She nicknamed the tortoise after the famously

slow-moving freeway in Los Angeles. If you ever brought up the desert in a meeting with Senator Feinstein, she much more often than not summoned her staff to “Bring me the poster of 405!” That is how committed she was.

Now, in that light, I am proud that one of the bills on the agenda today would rename the Cottonwood Visitor Center at Joshua Tree National Park as the Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center. As the Park Service notes in their testimony, Senator Feinstein authored the California Desert Protection Act that created the Mojave National Preserve. It also expanded and redesignated Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments as national parks and designated over seven million acres of California desert as wilderness. So on the 25th anniversary of the passage of Senator Feinstein’s signature California Desert Protection Act, Senator Feinstein wrote that “the California Desert is a true American treasure.” So what better way to honor her legacy than by forever ensuring that visitors to Joshua Tree National Park are reminded or are taught about Senator Feinstein’s enduring public lands legacy. The Park Service even notes in their testimony that they plan to construct a new visitor center at Cottonwood and recommends that the Committee be clear in its actions that we ensure any successor visitor center at that location also be named for Senator Feinstein.

Mr. Chair, I also have two other California desert bills on the agenda today to continue Senator Feinstein’s efforts to protect the California desert. These bills would expand the boundaries of the Mojave National Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park. I thank the Park Service for their supportive testimony in these non-controversial bills as well. Thank you.

Senator KING. Senator Van Hollen.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you.

Senator KING. Welcome to the Committee.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Chairman King. It is great to be here. I was glad to learn that you and a bipartisan group of Senators were able to visit Antietam Battlefield in the great State of Maryland. I had planned to join you, but we had a family graduation. I look forward to catching up with you. And I want to thank you, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak to you on the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, a bill that I introduced with Senators Cardin, Warner, and Kaine and that has been introduced in the House of Representatives on a bipartisan basis by Congressman John Sarbanes of Maryland and Congressman Wittman of Virginia.

As I think everyone here knows, Senator Daines’ reference to the Bay in his comments—the Chesapeake Bay is a natural treasure that sits at the heart of my home State of Maryland and is a watershed that includes six other states, up to New York, as well as the District of Columbia. While there is a National Parks office that works to improve access to the Bay, there is no dedicated Chesapeake Bay unit of the National Park Service—a surprising gap in our National Park System. The idea for a Chesapeake National Recreation Area was born four decades ago, motivated by the de-

sire to formally recognize the Chesapeake Bay as the national treasure that it is and to provide all Americans with more of an opportunity to experience it. If enacted, the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act would allow the National Park Service to, through voluntary agreements, partner with states, localities, and private entities to increase public access to the Chesapeake Bay. A Chesapeake National Recreation Area would allow visitors to experience the Bay firsthand and learn about the incredible resources and restoration effort and strengthen the culture of stewardship across the region. It will also provide visitors with an opportunity to learn about the rich history of the region and those who have lived and worked on the Bay. A national recreation area for the Chesapeake Bay would also create jobs and accelerate economic growth in the region. That designation will attract visitors to the Bay, boosting outdoor recreation and our tourism economy, including our boating economy.

Importantly, the establishment of a Chesapeake National Recreation Area will not—and I want to stress this—impact water or fishing rights, supersede state authority, impose any additional regulations on recreational or business activities in the Chesapeake Bay waters, or require any sale of real estate. This bipartisan initiative has been driven by local leaders since the beginning, and it was developed through an exhaustive public outreach and meaningful collaboration process with a broad range of stakeholders. I started working on this with Congressman Sarbanes and local advocates in 2018—conducting informal outreach, developing legislative language, and soliciting technical advice from the National Park Service.

We formed our working group in 2021, composed of a bicameral group of lawmakers, state government representatives, and more than 30 regional organizations. In June 2022, the working group released ten guiding principles outlining a framework for what the Chesapeake National Recreation Area would be. Later that year, we released a discussion draft based on the working group's guiding principles, held many information sessions with interested stakeholders, and had a six-month-long public comment period. We compiled over 1,300 comments and integrated feedback into the bill. We finally introduced it in July of last year with strong support. The bill has garnered over 100 endorsements from local elected officials, environmental and historical preservation organizations, seafood and outdoor recreation businesses, and many more.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to submit the 74 letters of support from groups throughout the Chesapeake Watershed.

Senator KING. Without objection.

[Letters of support for S. 2620 follow:]

Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Initiative

The effort to establish a Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) is supported by a wide array of over 100 stakeholders from local elected officials, to environmental and historical preservation organizations, to racial justice advocacy groups, to seafood and outdoor recreation businesses, and many more.

Supporting Organizations:

- ABS Group
- Ad Hoc, LLC
- Alice Ferguson Foundation
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- American Sportfishing Association
- Annapolis Green
- Bay Paddle
- Black by Nature
- Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation, Inc.
- Blue Oyster Environmental LLC
- Blue Water Baltimore
- Brandywine Foundation
- Capital Region Land Conservancy
- Chesapeake Bay Commission
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School
- Chesapeake Conservancy
- Chesapeake Legal Alliance
- Chesapeake Region Accessible Boating (CRAB)
- Chispa Maryland
- Choose Clean Water Coalition
- Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park
- Coalition to Protect America's National Parks
- Conservation International
- Corazon Latino
- Defensores de la Cuenca
- Destination Southern Maryland
- DockShare
- EcoLatinos
- Elizabeth River Project
- Fort Monroe Authority
- Friends of the Rappahannock
- Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
- Healthy Planet LLC
- Hispanic Access Foundation
- Historic Annapolis
- Inn at Tabbs Creek
- James River Association
- Latino Outdoors
- Living Classrooms
- Maryland League of Conservation Voters
- Morgan State University P.E.A.R.L. Facility
- National Aquarium
- National Park Trust
- National Parks Conservation Association
- National Preservation Institute
- National Recreation and Parks Association
- Newport News Shipbuilding
- National Marine Manufacturers Association
- Northern Neck Planning District Commission
- Outward Bound
- Oyster Recovery Partnership
- Park Institute of America
- Potomac Conservancy
- Preservation Maryland
- Preservation Virginia
- Public Lands Alliance
- REI
- Scenic Virginia
- Scharle Outdoor Recreation Consulting, LLC
- Severn River Association
- Shellfish Growers of Virginia
- Shenandoah National Park Trust

- ShoreRivers (Chester, Choptank, Mile-Wye & Sassafras Riverkeepers)
- Sierra Club
- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP)
- Stratford Hall
- Surfrider Foundation
- Susquehannock Wildlife Society
- The Conservation Fund
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Wilderness Society
- Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse (U.S. Lighthouse Society)
- Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust
- Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
- Virginia Oyster Trail
- Virginia Tourism
- Visit Annapolis
- Washington College
- Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore
- Waterkeepers Chesapeake
- Youth Sailing Virginia

Elected Officials, Local Governments, and Economic Development Groups:

- Annapolis Mayor Gavin Buckley
- Anne Arundel County Executive Stuart Pittman
- Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation
- Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott
- Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olzewski
- Beach to Bay Heritage Greenway
- Calvert County Board of Commissioners
- Charles County Commissioners President Reuben Collins
- Chestertown Mayor David Foster
- Chickahominy Tribe
- Easton Mayor Megan Cook
- Former Maryland Governor Larry Hogan
- Former Virginia Governor Ralph Northam
- Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater
- Greater Salisbury Committee
- Howard County Executive Calvin Ball
- Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway
- Maryland Chamber of Commerce
- Maryland Governor Wes Moore
- Maryland State Delegate Dana Jones - District 30A
- Maryland State Senator Sarah Elfreth - District 30 A/B
- Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich
- Nansemond Tribe
- Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks
- Rappahannock Tribe Chief Anne Richardson
- Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce
- Somerset Economic Development Commission

 Ad Hoc

July 5, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Ad Hoc LLC, I am writing to thank you for your leadership in creating the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Ad Hoc is a digital services company that works in partnership with the federal government to provide reliable online digital services that enable people to receive quality public services. Our mission is closely aligned with advocating for the government to take ownership of this property and designate it as a national park. We aim to empower the government to provide for the general welfare, making this advocacy effort strongly connected to our mission. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish the jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public



understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory J. Gershman".

Gregory J. Gershman
Co-founder and CEO
Ad Hoc LLC

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



Office of the Mayor
Gavin Buckley, Mayor
160 Duke of Gloucester Street
Annapolis, MD 21401-2517

Chartered 1708

July 11, 2023

Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

The Chesapeake Bay is central to the life and prosperity of Annapolis, the region, and the nation. That is why I am proud to be a local partner in your efforts to establish a Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) that will bring recognition to the importance of the Bay and provide resources to support its natural, cultural, historical, and recreational significance.

Designating a unified CNRA as part of the National Park System will bring enormous benefits including:

- an opportunity to better conserve the Bay, deliver additional federal resources to the region, and generate more – and more sustainable – economic opportunities
- promoting a healthy ecosystem and habitat, conserving and protecting lands, bolstering environmental stewardship and climate resiliency
- sparking environmentally conscious tourism that supports those in the food, lodging, outdoor recreation, and travel businesses, with potential to generate billions of dollars in new revenue. (According to the National Park Service, visitors spent \$20.5 billion in local gateway regions while visiting national parks in 2021.)

Importantly, the CNRA will highlight the stories that often go untold – those of Indigenous peoples; free and enslaved Blacks; and the role the Bay played in the earliest days of the Maryland and Virginia Colonies.

Annapolis has a particular interest in this history, as it's economy was boosted for many decades by the contributions of watermen and women who are essential to the economic success and health of our city and the Bay region.

The upcoming redevelopment of the Annapolis City Dock provides a critical and timely opportunity to highlight these often overlooked aspects of our history. Our new City Dock will also provide a transportation hub and an outstanding visitor experience that will connect to and complement other destinations across the CNRA. It will also be a showcase for the resilience efforts being led across the Bay, including one of the nation's first electric ferry systems.

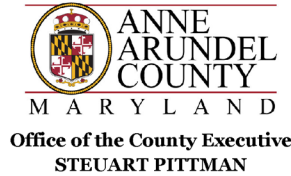
I thank you and Congressman Sarbanes for your partnership and your work in drafting this legislation to highlight the national significance of the Chesapeake Bay. Annapolis is ready to play its part and I wholeheartedly support this Bill. I would encourage your Congressional colleagues to support its passage also. It offers a unique opportunity to foster access, resources, and economic growth and deliver hugely significant regional and national benefits.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gavin Buckley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gavin Buckley
Mayor

Cc. Congressman John Sarbanes



May 14, 2024

The Honorable Joe Manchin
Chairman
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy & Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Angus King
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, Chairman King and Ranking Member Daines:

On behalf of Anne Arundel County, I write to express my strong support for the Chesapeake National Recreational Area bill (S. 2620). The bill would establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) and permanently reauthorize the National Park Service (NPS) Chesapeake Gateways program.

I am grateful for the bipartisan leadership of the Maryland and Virginia Congressional delegations to advance the CNRA bill and companion House legislation (H.R. 5405). The bill will increase public access to the Bay, boost our tourism industry, and showcase one of Maryland's greatest natural and cultural resources.

I support the bill's designation of the following sites in Anne Arundel County as part of the CNRA:

- Whitehall Manor: Originally built by Horatio Sharpe, the last British colonial governor of Maryland, Whitehall was the first National Historical Landmark to be designated in Maryland. If acquired by NPS, the site would provide recreational access to the Bay.
- Burtis House: Located in downtown Annapolis, this house was once owned by Captain William Henry Burtis, a former waterman. His former could serve as the headquarters and the visitors center for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area.

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www.aacounty.org | 44 Calvert Street, Annapolis, MD 21401 | (410)-222-1821 | countyexecutive@aacounty.org

- Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse: The iconic lighthouse is the only screw-pile lighthouse in the Chesapeake Bay.

By expanding recreational access to the Bay, the CNRA bill will benefit local families, businesses, and visitors from Maryland and across the country. Anne Arundel County residents will benefit from the bill which will create recreational opportunities for boating, fishing, hiking and other activities. The CNRA will also complement the beautiful Sandy Point State Park, Holly Beach Farm, the City of Annapolis' Elktonia-Carr's Beach Heritage Park and other parks in the County.

The County appreciates the Maryland Congressional delegation's inclusive process to develop this bill in close partnership with local stakeholders. We invite you to Annapolis to tour these sites and experience the benefits they would provide to our County and the nation.

I look forward to supporting our delegation's efforts to pass this legislation. Thank you for considering my support for this bill which would protect and promote the Chesapeake Bay for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of current and future generations.

Sincerely,



Steuart Pittman
County Executive

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www.aacounty.org | 44 Calvert Street, Annapolis, MD 21401 | (410)-222-1821 | countyexecutive@aacounty.org



July 11, 2023

Senator Chris Van Hollen
60 West Street, Suite 107
Annapolis, MD 21401

Representative John Sarbanes
44 Calvert Street, Suite 349
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area Proposed Legislation
Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

The Anne Arundel Economic Development Corporation (AAEDC) writes to express our support for the proposed Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System.

Anne Arundel County is home to over 530 miles of coastline along the Chesapeake Bay that provide a prime location for recreation experiences such as boating, fishing, crabbing, water sports, sailing, and swimming. The Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries offer natural and cultural resources that draw visitors to enjoy the shoreline experiences and learn about its history and culture.

In addition to serving the tourism economy, the shoreline and waterways house maritime businesses, educational programs and government institutions. Anne Arundel County's history is rooted in its maritime industry, which serves as a major driver of economic growth and stability. AAEDC supports a CNRA designation that would help to sustain these critical economic functions, bolster tourism activity and increase public access to the waterfront.

According to the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "national park visitors make a significant contribution to the nation's economy and, especially to gateway communities in and adjacent to these areas. In 2021, local gateway regions attracted close to 300 million visitors, generating \$20.5 billion in visitor spending and creating 323 thousand jobs."

Federal investment in the Chesapeake Bay will elevate its national and international significance, thus generating economic benefits to food, lodging, recreational and maritime related businesses. This investment also preserves invaluable historic and cultural resources that tell the stories of our past, particularly those of the Burtis House, Whitehall and historic downtown Annapolis.

The Chesapeake National Recreation Area designation achieves multiple policy goals of ecological stewardship, historic and cultural preservation, economic development, and equity. AAEDC appreciates and supports your efforts to deliver resources to one of Anne Arundel's key economic assets and create a regional amenity that the public can enjoy and celebrate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Gowan".

Amy Gowan
CEO and President



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

July 11, 2023

The Honorable Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman John Sarbanes
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area designation

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes:

Please accept this letter in support of your efforts to establish a Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as a unit of the National Park Service (NPS) to promote stewardship of the Chesapeake region's natural, cultural, and recreational resources in Maryland and Virginia.

As a lifelong Marylander, and former school teacher, I understand Maryland's place in our Nation's history, and support efforts to raise awareness of and access to our rich historic and cultural resources. As the County Executive of Baltimore County, I have prioritized the expansion and improvement of county parks and recreational amenities as well as the development and promotion of heritage and outdoor tourism. These are the resources that make Baltimore County, and by extension, the entire Chesapeake Region unique.

Establishing a unified Chesapeake National Recreational Area in Maryland and Virginia stands to benefit so many small community-based historic and cultural sites by connecting them to others across the Chesapeake region. Doing so in a collaborative, voluntary manner, without creating additional regulations or restrictions on existing uses or users, will ensure preservation of the very characteristics your legislation seeks to highlight.

As such, I am pleased to offer my support for this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John A. Olszewski, Jr.", is written over the printed name and title. The signature is stylized and fluid.

John A. Olszewski, Jr.
Baltimore County Executive



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*100 Holliday Street, Room 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202*

July 17, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator for Maryland
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

RE: Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

I write to you today on behalf of the citizens of Baltimore, Maryland to express support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). The development of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area would bring much-needed national recognition of the importance of the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake National Recreation Area will tell the stories of the nation's largest estuary and one of the world's largest environmental restoration efforts, including the people who have contributed to it. Creating the CNRA will also support efforts to protect the Bay and strengthen local businesses. The CNRA will spark environmentally conscious tourism that supports those in the food, lodging, outdoor recreation, and travel businesses. Baltimore is known for such wonderful attractions and amenities; it would give me great pleasure to advocate for the creation of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area.

In service,

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor City of Baltimore

July 7, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Bay Paddle, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

Bay Paddle is an annual paddle race that's drawn hundreds of people to the Chesapeake region, created millions of press and social media attention, was the inspiration for PBS/MPT documentary film and has raised nearly \$400k in just 3 years to help protect the Bay.

Bay Paddle all started with one person getting on the Bay for the first time and feeling a responsibility to do more.

We believe the Bay has the potential to become a paddling destination, similar to the Appalachian Trail for hikers, attracting thousands of paddlers annually to its waters and surrounding towns.

Establishing this new national recreation area would help put the Chesapeake region on the map for paddle adventurers worldwide as one of the top travel destinations for paddling.

Additionally, it would help open up more public access to the Bay and allow more people to enjoy its beauty, creating more citizen soldiers to help protect its waters for generations.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Chris Hopkinson

Chris Hopkinson

Founder

Bay Paddle

chris@baypaddle.org

Ph: 301-520-8990

www.baypaddle.org

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott

June 22, 2023



U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

On behalf of the Beach to Bay Heritage Area, I want to lend our enthusiastic support for legislation that will designate a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA).

This venture has the potential to provide ecological, cultural, and economic benefits to the region.

The CNRA would utilize a collection of partnerships with states, localities, and private entities intended to highlight the diverse landscape and national significance of the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure and the largest estuary in the nation. This effort will highlight the ecological importance, iconic landscape, rich culture and history, and vast recreational benefits of the region and will tell a common narrative about the nation's largest estuary and one of the world's largest environmental restoration efforts.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is also home to numerous cultural heritage sites that tell the story of our nation's inception. The CNRA will highlight the stories that often go untold – those of Indigenous peoples, free and enslaved Blacks, and watermen and women who've all played a vital role in the economic success and health of the Bay region.

Rather than a single place, the CNRA will build on the success of the National Park Service Chesapeake Gateways and Water Trails Program and elevate key, discrete sites around the Bay while linking them together under the coordinated brand of the Park Service.

We are very excited to see this effort being put forward and support it wholeheartedly!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Challenger".

Lisa Challenger
Executive Director

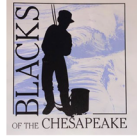
14 South Main Street
Berlin, MD 21811
BeachesBaysWaterWays.com
info@BeachtoBayHeritage.org
410-251-3163

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Lisa Challenger



1125 West Street * Ste. 200 * Annapolis, MD 21401 * 410.461.2623
www.blacksofthechesapeake.org

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
 United States Senate
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
 U.S. House of Representatives
 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

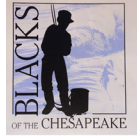
RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation (BOCF), I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. BOCF documents, promotes, and educates the public about the significant contributions of African Americans to the bay's maritime industries and culture, and we are committed to preserving and conserving the environment. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System, and that this unit includes the critical contributions of Black Americans to the American experience in the mid-Atlantic.

African Americans have a long-established history in the Chesapeake watershed. Familiar historical figures, such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, have deep connections to the bay. Southern Maryland counties are the cradle of African American history and culture, between the Patuxent and Potomac tributaries. These navigable waterways spawned the growth of our nascent nation, as fishing and farming industries flourished. However, these ancient rivers were waters of hope and despair for enslaved and free Africans, given their place in history with the Underground Railroad. The Chesapeake Bay and its connecting rivers served as a pathway to the north. During the Civil War, the watershed was divided over slavery. Black citizens were crucial to the Union war effort, engaging in wartime operations and serving in the army. The 1860s also saw the growth of the fishing industry in the region and, with it, the presence of African American watermen.

The perseverance, productivity and resourcefulness of African Americans have had a profound impact on the cultural and historical heritage of our country and the Chesapeake Bay. Despite the invaluable impact that African American communities have had on the watershed for hundreds



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www.blacksofthechesapeake.org

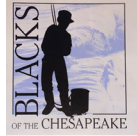
of years, our history has been underreported. Black history is American history, and American history is Black history. The two of them cannot be told separately or considered apart. This is one of our country's wrongs that we are working to make right. We think all of us in the modern era can acknowledge that and give the same honor and respect to African American history as the "founding fathers" history that we were all taught. We now need school systems, governments, and all institutions to see the value of this inclusive mindset. We use the BoCF platform to repeatedly share the message, "*This Bay is Your Bay- This Bay is Our Bay*: It belongs to everyone, and we are all tied to its history, culture, and ecosystem." The CNRA is an important way to underscore this message.

As a fellow waterman and longtime proponent of recognizing, preserving, and commemorating the impact of African Americans and our history in the watershed, I know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder, fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. The FY '22 Federal Directed Spending allocation will expedite the needed master-planning, infrastructure improvements, as well as environmental assessment- shoreline erosion mitigation, historical & cultural interpretation of the future 5-acre Elktonia Heritage Park, making it an affiliate unit of the National Park Service. We also appreciate the potential inclusion of historical sites with essential black history that have never been open to the public, including the Whitehall Estate located on the Broadneck Peninsula of the greater Annapolis area.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish the jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

The Maryland Congressional Delegation's recent support, under the leadership of senior Senator Benjamin Cardin, for the acquisition of Elktonia, Carr's & Sparrows Beaches African American Land Conservation & Heritage Preservation Project, to be returned for public access and a much-needed education and cultural history venue, must be "another milestone" in elevating black voices along the Chesapeake, and not the "last milestone."



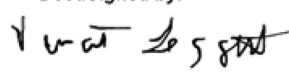
1125 West Street * Ste. 200 * Annapolis, MD 21401 * 410.461.2623
www.blacksofthechesapeake.org

Passage of the CNRA will aid the Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation in identifying and amplifying other historical and cultural sites located along the reaches of the bay. Columbia Beach in Shadyside, MD is currently undergoing a robust nomination process to become the first African American community in Anne Arundel County, MD to receive designation as a National Historical Landmark through the U.S. Department of the Interior, evidencing the BOCF's strategic plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of the CNRA. Our work is to map and interpret a string of "Black Pearls"- (historically and culturally significant) - African American sites on the bay, extending to Tidewater & Northern Neck of Virginia.

The passage of the CNRA legislation will greatly facilitate the participation of faculty, staff and students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) to fully engage in efforts to improve the water quality of the bay and tributaries particularly in communities with large minority populations and bordering urban waterways.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake, and to helping the National Park Service and its partner tell the full story of African American history in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

 82318C8A9B6844F...

Vince Leggett
 Founder and President
 Blacks of the Chesapeake Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
 The Honorable Mark Warner
 The Honorable Tim Kaine
 The Honorable Bobby Scott

Brandywine Foundation, Inc.

1915 Whitehall Rd.
Annapolis, MD 21409

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Brandywine Foundation, I am writing to express our strong support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) bills (S. 2620 and H.R. 5045) which would authorize the National Park Service (NPS) to acquire Whitehall from the Foundation.

The Brandywine Foundation is a family-led nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and preserving Whitehall as a resource for the community, education and the arts. For over 77 years, my family has owned Whitehall, both personally and through our family foundation. Our family was honored by the Department of the Interior's designation of Whitehall as National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1960. We also donated a preservation easement to the National Trust for Historic Preservation to ensure that Whitehall's natural, cultural and historic resources will be preserved for current and future generations.

In recent years, we have worked to generate revenue, consistent with our mission, to help support the long-term maintenance of the property. We appreciate technical support provided by NPS's Gateways Program. We are pleased to partner with the Chesapeake Conservancy to explore long-term management options and to secure funds to improve Whitehall Manor. In the last few years, we have realized that the best option for the future of Whitehall is to be added to the National Park System, as part of the proposed CNRA.

As we approach America 250, the Foundation strongly supports S. 2620 and H.R. 5045, which would authorize the National Park Service (NPS) to acquire or partner with Whitehall and other sites in the Chesapeake region that offer cultural, historic, environmental and recreational opportunities that should be accessible to all. Your bill would enable our family to exercise one of the core elements of private property rights: the ability to transfer property to another party that is aligned with our mission and vision for this important property.

Thank you for introducing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act and considering our view. We look forward to working with you to pass this important bill.

Sincerely,



Charlie Scarlett
President



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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

175 Main Street
Prince Frederick, Maryland 20678
410-535-1600 • 301-855-1243
www.calvertcountymd.gov

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July 11, 2023

The Honorable Christopher Van Hollen
United States Senate
1101 Mercantile Lane, Suite 210
Largo, MD 20774

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

We are pleased to hear about the draft legislation co-authored by yourself and Congressman Sarbanes to designate a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System. Your bill aims to spotlight the Chesapeake Bay's national significance and the stories which have shaped its identity. Additionally, it seeks to deliver more federal resources to the watershed region, grow its economic prosperity, preserve its environment and foster greater public access to the bay.

Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan referred to the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the country, as a national treasure. As such, it is imperative to all who live on the watershed to do their part in preserving this treasure for generations to come. We, therefore, write in support of a unified CNRA as part of the National Park System, with appropriate safeguards for both environmental and economic interests.

Should you have questions or wish to discuss further, please contact County Administrator Julian M. Willis at 410-535-1600, ext. 2200.

Sincerely, Members of the

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

Earl F. Hance

Mike Hart, Vice President

Mark C. Cox Sr.

Catherine M. Grasso

Todd Ireland



City of Cambridge

410 Academy Street, Cambridge, MD – P.O. Box 255

Phone: 410-228-4020 Fax: 410-228-4554

E-Mail info@chooscambridge.com

July 26, 2023

Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: The Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

I am pleased to write this letter in support of the designation of the Chesapeake Bay as the Chesapeake National Recreational Area (CRNA). Its designation will bring national recognition to the importance of the Bay and provide resources to support its natural, cultural, historical, and recreational significance.

Establishing the Chesapeake National Recreational Area will attract a widespread awareness to the significance of the Bay. It will help to tell the stories of the nation's largest estuary and one of the world's largest environmental restoration efforts.

The National Park Service designation will provide an opportunity to help better conserve the Bay, deliver additional federal resources to the region, and generate more economic opportunities for those people whose livelihoods depend on the Bay.

The natural health of the Bay has been a continuing challenge for years, and having it be a CRNA will help the many organizations that have worked so hard to bring it back to its former beauty and health. It will help increase environmentally conscious tourism that supports those in the food, lodging, outdoor recreation, and travel business. It will build on the NPS legacy of preservation, conservation, and stewardship to protect the natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and educate future generations of stewards in the process.

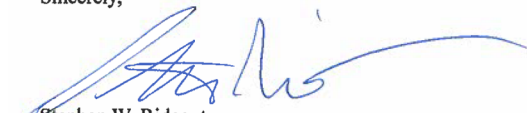
At a time when so many people in our larger close by cities need the opportunity to get away from their urban areas, the CNRA will help local rural communities such as Cambridge and Dorchester County attract them for recreational opportunities that they might not have had close to their homes. It will also help our rural communities to create spaces that eliminate transportation,

language, and mobility barriers and will help create a safe and welcoming natural environment for all to enjoy.

Especially in Cambridge and Dorchester County there are many untold stories of Indigenous people and free and enslaved peoples that need to be shared. While there has been a recent effort here in Cambridge to begin that journey, much more needs to be done to properly tell the whole story of the role that the Bay and all of its people played in the earliest days of the Maryland and Virginia Colonies as well as of this nation.

Thank you for considering this letter and my views on this important matter. I hope that this effort is successful.

Sincerely,



Stephen W. Rideout

Mayor



February 27, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area*
S.2620 & H.R. 5045

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC), I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Since its beginning efforts with the Chesapeake Conservancy and the Chesapeake Conservation Partnership, CRLC has been an avid supporter of the CNRA including hosting a community meeting in Richmond, Virginia to learn more about the benefits. Our mission is to conserve the natural and historic resources of Virginia's Richmond region for the benefit of people and nature.

Since 2018, CRLC has protected an additional 1,400 acres of public land including five sites with significant cultural meaning to our community. This includes 15-acre Mayo Island in downtown Richmond as well as 5 acres along the James River that has now protected the "View that Named Richmond" from Libby Hill Park. It includes 871 acres at Malvern Hill Farm and 353 acres at Deep Bottom in Henrico County. The latter was settled by the indigenous Arrohattoc people and has a 1634 historical reference to "Powhatan's tree" where it is said Opechanacnough reaffirmed peace with the colonist about 1620. It was also the site of several Civil War battles where the U. S. Colored Troops fought in 1864 including the Battle of New Market Heights. Finally in Petersburg, we have acquired land and islands associated with the early industrialization of Virginia including the ruins of six mills that date to as early as 1791 as well as a series of dams and canals that feed off the Appomattox River.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new

recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Thank you once again for introducing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, S.2620 and H.R. 5045. We look forward to working with you to ensure final passage in the Congress to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,



Parker C. Agelasto
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



Charles County Government

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Mark Belton
 County Administrator

July 25, 2023

The Honorable U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

RE: Letter of Support for the Designation of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

The Charles County Board of Commissioners is writing to express our support for the designation of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). We join our community in advocating for the preservation of our natural treasures and believe that the establishment of the CNRA will be a significant step in safeguarding the ecological, cultural, and historical significance of the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay holds a special place in the hearts of many, not only for its natural beauty but also for the rich tapestry of history and culture it embodies. Designating the CNRA will bring well-deserved national recognition to the Bay's importance and will provide crucial resources to support its conservation efforts. This designation will serve as a testament to the nation's commitment to preserving our natural heritage for generations to come.

Moreover, the CNRA will play a vital role in sharing the stories of the Chesapeake Bay's significance as the largest estuary in the United States and its role as one of the world's largest environmental restoration endeavors. By showcasing the contributions of the individuals and communities that have dedicated themselves to the Bay's protection, the CNRA will not only educate the public but also inspire more people to take part in the conservation efforts.

The collaborative nature of the CNRA is commendable. By leveraging partnerships between the National Park Service, states, and localities, the CNRA ensures that existing sites and resources are put to the best use in safeguarding the Bay's delicate ecosystem. Furthermore, by highlighting the diverse groups of people living around the Chesapeake Bay, the CNRA will foster an inclusive approach to conservation that respects and cherishes the region's rich cultural heritage.

The CNRA will undoubtedly bring national recognition to the importance of the Chesapeake Bay and provide the necessary resources to protect its natural, cultural, historical, and recreational significance. It will advance environmental conservation efforts and be a source of pride for all of us who live here and care about preserving our

CNRA Letter of Support
Page 2
July 25, 2023

nation's natural wonders. Additionally, we know it will create opportunities for growth and prosperity in the region, benefiting both residents and visitors alike.

We are pleased to voice our support for the designation of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area for the benefit of current and future generations and thank you for your consideration of this request.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RC', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq.
President, Charles County Board of Commissioners



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Saving a National Treasure

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July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to restore and protect the ecological health of the Chesapeake Bay, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

Promoting and expanding opportunities to experience the Bay and learn about its history have been long-standing priorities for CBF. As the nation's largest estuary and home to abundant wildlife and cultural diversity, the Chesapeake Bay watershed is without question nationally significant. The Bay holds a special place in our hearts as well as our region's unique history. The designation of the CNRA, along with the permanent authorization of the Chesapeake Gateways program, are necessary for elevating the stories of the Bay's ecosystem and restoration efforts, history, and cultural diversity.

CBF has focused on reaching all communities across the watershed, recognizing the systemic barriers in accessing waterfront recreation and the associated benefits including public health and quality of life. With the watershed spanning 64,000 square miles and boasting more than 11,000 miles of shoreline, all residents and visitors should have the opportunity to enjoy this wonderful resource and all the recreation opportunities it provides. We support the creation of the CNRA, as it would increase both the quantity and quality of public access sites around the Bay, supporting the connections between the people and the waterway and wildlife.

CBF supports all partners in the watershed, residents, and those who rely on Bay resources; thus, we appreciate that the CNRA allows for the voluntary transfer of land for property owners wishing to participate in this effort. We also support the explicit



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Saving a National Treasure

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Alan L. Wurtzel

requirement that commercial and recreational fisheries as well as states' authority to manage fish and wildlife species will not be impacted by this effort.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you to ensure swift passage of this bill and the establishment of this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,
Keisha Sedlacek
Federal Director
Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



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213 NORTH TALBOT STREET | ST. MICHAELS, MD 21663 | 410-745-2916 | CBMM.ORG

July 25, 2023

Senator Chris Van Hollen
Eastern Shore Office
204 Cedar Street
Suite 200C
Cambridge, MD 21613

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum (CBMM), I wish to share our support for the designation of a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System. Establishment of the recreation area is a pivotal opportunity to protect the Bay's natural heritage, promote tourism, and foster a deeper appreciation for the environment and the Bay's recreational significance.

The Chesapeake Bay is an ecological gem, boasting a diverse ecosystem that provides habitat to countless species of wildlife and serves as a vital link in the migratory routes of many birds. This unique and fragile ecosystem faces numerous challenges, including pollution, habitat loss, and the effects of climate change. By designating the Chesapeake Bay as a National Recreation Area, its conservation status can be elevated and significant steps toward safeguarding its natural beauty for current and future generations can be taken.

One of the primary benefits of establishing the CNRA is the increased protection it would afford to the Bay's wetlands, forests, and waterways. By preserving these critical natural habitats, we can help maintain biodiversity, support local ecosystems, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Additionally, the recreation area designation would enhance collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies, as well as partner organizations, leading to improved conservation efforts and streamlined management practices.

The Chesapeake Bay has a rich cultural and historical significance, serving as a source of livelihood, sustenance, and recreation for communities living along its shores for centuries. Establishing the CNRA would not only protect the area's natural wonders but also celebrate its cultural heritage, providing opportunities for visitors to learn about the history and traditions of the region. This, in turn, can foster a sense of pride and stewardship among local communities, ensuring continued support for conservation initiatives.

Furthermore, the CNRA would undoubtedly boost tourism in the region, benefiting the local economy and creating new employment opportunities. A well-managed recreation area would attract visitors from across the country and around the world, providing them with memorable experiences while also contributing to the economic growth of nearby communities. CBMM would be honored to partner in this regard.

I commend your efforts in championing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area and urge you to continue working with your colleagues in Congress to make this vision a reality. The creation of the CNRA will leave a legacy of environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, and economic prosperity for our region and the nation.

Thank you, Senator Van Hollen, for your dedication to environmental conservation and advocating for the protection of the Chesapeake Bay. Your leadership on this issue gives me hope that we can secure a vibrant and sustainable future for this cherished natural treasure.

Yours sincerely,



Kristen L. Greenaway
President & CEO
410-745-4955
kgreenaway@cbmm.org



Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places

716 Giddings Avenue, Suite 42 | Annapolis, MD 21401
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July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

*RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area and Gateways Network
 Reauthorization*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Chesapeake Conservancy, I write to express our strong support for your bill to authorize the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System, and to permanently reauthorize the National Park Service's Chesapeake Gateways Network. We commend your outstanding leadership and look forward to working with you to pass the bill to protect and interpret the Chesapeake's outstanding natural, historic and cultural resources and increase recreational access to one of America's greatest treasures.

The Chesapeake Bay is as spectacular as Yellowstone or Yosemite, as great as the Great Smokies and as grand as the Grand Tetons. The Bay is home to Indigenous people with a rich cultural heritage spanning generations. In addition to being the birthplace of our nation's founding principles of freedom and equality, it is the birthplace of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass and the Emancipation Proclamation. The bill will also complement efforts to tell the stories of military service and sacrifice in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War.

By increasing public access to the Bay, your bill will enable current and future generations to better appreciate, enjoy and protect the Chesapeake's nationally significant resources. Your bill will also strengthen public support for watershed and habitat restoration projects, the Chesapeake Bay Program and investments in water quality that create and retain local jobs.

Thanks to your extensive consultation with the public, we believe that your bill provides an appropriate balance to meet the needs of Bay stakeholders. It will ensure public access to our nation's largest estuary and provide for those who live nearby and depend on the Bay for their livelihoods. We support the bill's language relating to "willing seller" private landowners, commercial and recreational fishing and state jurisdiction over fish and wildlife management.

Chesapeake Conservancy stands ready to work with you, local elected officials and Bay stakeholders to recognize the Bay's national significance, designate the CNRA and leave a lasting legacy to future generations.

Sincerely,



cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott
Governor Wes Moore
Governor Glenn Youngkin



106 Ridgely Avenue.
Annapolis, MD 21401
T: 410-216-9441
F: 410-216-7077
www.ChesapeakeLegal.org

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Chesapeake Legal Alliance (CLA), I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. CLA is a nonprofit organization based in Annapolis, Maryland, and we are the only regional organization solely dedicated to providing free legal services to protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We are trusted source for innovative legal strategies to solve the Bay's most complex problems and our clients include individuals, community groups and environmental advocates working to protect the Bay's lands, waters and communities. CLA also works with local, state, and federal regulators seeking unique solutions to Chesapeake Bay protection and restoration. That is why our organization strongly supports the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

CHESAPEAKE
LEGAL ALLIANCE

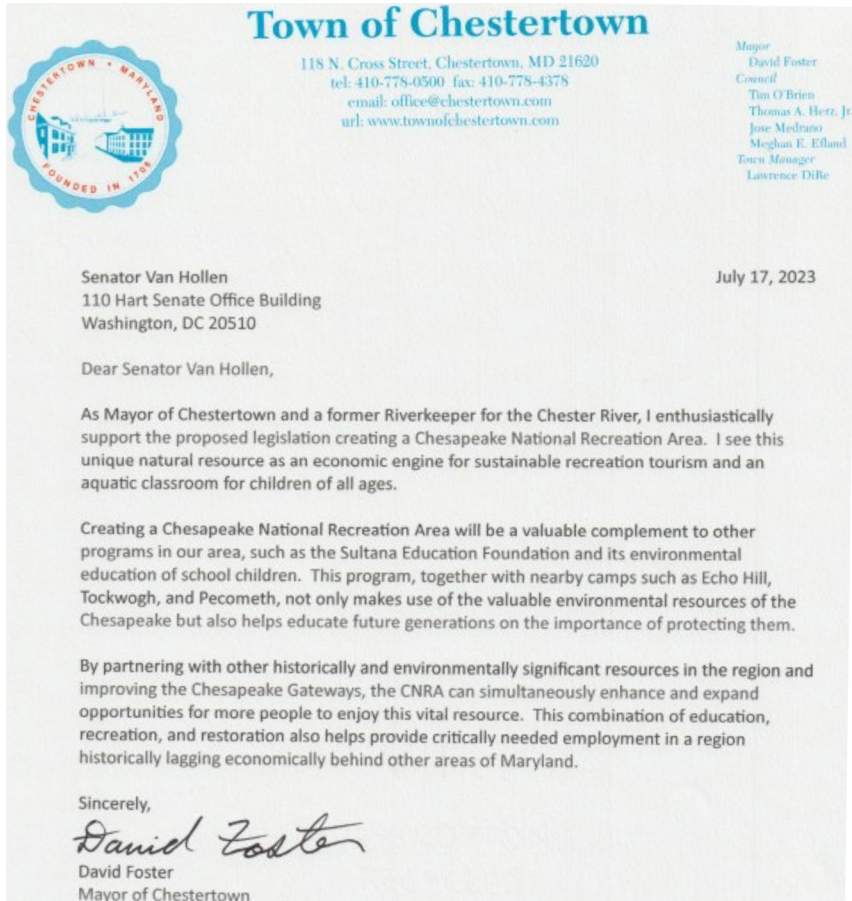
Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Will Halnon
Staff Attorney, Outreach & Engagement Coordinator
T: 410-216-9441 | F: 410-216-7077
William@chesapeakelegal.org

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott





Choose Clean Water
COALITION

443-927-8049
info@chooscleanwater.org
151 West Street, Suite 101
Annapolis, MD 21401

June 29, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes:

As the co-chairs of the Choose Clean Water Coalition we thank you both and strongly support your leadership to create a Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). We are a coalition of more than 285 organizations that advocate for clean rivers and streams in all communities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Promoting and expanding public access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries throughout the 64,000 square mile watershed are long-standing priorities for the Coalition, and we support your efforts to bring this to fruition by including the Chesapeake region as a new unit of the National Park Service.

We applaud your efforts to expand opportunities for recreational access to water in underserved communities throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed and to commemorate the rich culture and contributions of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) that have lacked recognition throughout history. The Coalition is also a long-time advocate for the Chesapeake Gateways program, and we strongly support your efforts to permanently authorize the Gateways program and to increase its funding as part of this effort.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a vast and varied landscape with a diverse population of almost 19 million residents. Your legislation will increase diverse public access to the iconic Chesapeake Bay and its many tributaries and will strengthen the culture of stewardship across the region.

We strongly support your efforts to create a CNRA and stand ready to help move this legislation forward. Please contact Peter J. Marx at peter@chooscleanwater.org with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Choose Clean Water Coalition Steering Committee Co-Chairs

Jennifer Mihills
National Wildlife Federation

Laura Bankey
National Aquarium

Molly Parzen
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania

www.chooscleanwater.org

Executive Council
 Phil Francis
 Don Hellmann
 Sue Consolo-Murphy
 Sue Fritzke
 Russell Galipeau
 Patrick Gregerson
 Tim Hudson
 Elaine Leslie
 Linda Mazzu
 Jeff Mow
 Don Neubacher
 Chris Powell
 Cheryl Schreier
 Bill Shaddox
 Chris Soller
 Sheridan Steele
 Terri Thomas
 Monique VanLandingham
 Clara Wooden



February 27, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
 U.S. Senate
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
 U.S. House of Representatives
 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area S. 2620 and H.R. 5045*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks (Coalition), I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. The Coalition is a non-profit organization composed of over 2,500 retired, former, or current employees of the National Park Service (NPS). The Coalition studies, educates, speaks, and acts for the preservation of America's National Park System. As a group we collectively represent nearly 45,000 years of experience managing and protecting America's most precious and important natural and historic resources. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed

communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Thank you once again for introducing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, S. 2620 and H.R. 5045. We look forward to working with you to ensure final passage in the Congress to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,



Philip A. Francis, Jr.
Chair of the Executive Council
Coalition to Protect America's National Parks

Email: Editor@protectnps.org
Mail: 2 Massachusetts Ave NE, Unit 77436, Washington, DC 20013
Web: www.protectnps.org
Phone: (202) 819-8622

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott

DANA JONES
Legislative District 30A
 Anne Arundel County

Appropriations Committee
Subcommittees

Vice Chair, Health and Social Services
 Oversight Committee on Pensions

Joint Committee on Administrative,
 Executive, and Legislative Review

Vice Chair, Anne Arundel
 County Delegation



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
 ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Maryland House of Delegates
 6 Bladen Street, Room 161
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401
 410-841-3211 • 301-858-3211
 800-492-7122 Ext. 3211
 Dana.Jones@house.state.md.us

Senator Christopher Van Hollen
 United States Senate
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

July 20, 2023

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

I am pleased to write to you to express my wholehearted support of your legislation to designate a Chesapeake National Recreational Area as part of the National Park Service. Establishing a Chesapeake National Recreational Area is not only a significant step towards safeguarding this invaluable resource but also an opportunity to foster environmental awareness and promote sustainable recreation. Under the stewardship of our remarkable National Park Service, I am confident this action will highlight the landscape and the national significance of our country's largest estuary.

Our Bay is an ecological treasure of immense importance, providing a vital habitat for countless species of plants, animals, and marine life. Its vast wetlands, scenic shores, and diverse ecosystems contribute significantly to the health and balance of our environment. Additionally, the Chesapeake Bay holds an extraordinary amount of history that has played a role in shaping the region and our country as a whole, including critical stories from communities that have been historically oppressed and underrepresented. As evidenced by the extensive workgroup that has shaped this legislation, I am excited by the opportunity the Chesapeake National Recreational Area has to use federal resources in order to highlight the experiences and lives of those who played, and continue to play, an essential role in the cultural and economic success of the region.

A Chesapeake National Recreation Area is critical to the future and preservation of the Bay. I applaud you for your leadership on the issue as we all continue to develop and advance policy that safeguards our cherished resource, while maximizing its educational, economical, and recreational uses for the public. Thank you for your continued work on this proposal and protecting the Bay.

Sincerely,

Delegate Dana Jones



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the startup company Dockshare, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Here at Dockshare, we are passionate about making the waterfront more accessible, and expanding public water access sites across our home state of Maryland and the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. Establishing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area will be a big step forward in establishing more public water access which will ultimately lead to more people visiting and working to protect our precious and fragile resources. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. I strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. I look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Laura M. Scharle

Laura M. Scharle
Marketing & Community Relations
Dockshare

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



TOWN OF EASTON

14 S. Harrison Street, P.O. Box 520
Easton, Maryland 21601
Phone: 410-822-2525
www.eastonmd.gov

July 11, 2023

Dear Legislators:

RE: Support for Legislation that Designates a Unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area as part of the National Park System

I am writing to express my support for legislation that would designate a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System. I believe this legislation has the potential for tremendous economic benefit to Talbot County and surrounding counties touching the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake National Recreation Area would utilize a collection of partnerships with states, localities, and private entities with the intent of highlighting the landscape and national significance of the Chesapeake Bay. National Park visitors make a significant contribution to the nation's economy and especially, to gateway communities such as Easton.

The Town of Easton has recently acquired land for a walkable, wooded park and is developing Easton Point Park as a key component of our recently adopted Port Street Small Area Plan. Providing appropriate park infrastructure is a key component to improve the physical fitness of any community. The educational and economic impact of visitors to a National Park System in Easton could be monumental in maintaining and sustaining recreational sites and opportunities in our community as units of the National Park System are among the top four priority destinations for international tourism.

Please act on the proposed legislation. The potential impact for this legislation will support the Town of Easton's continuing efforts to make Easton a great place to live, work and play.

Thank you for your consideration, and please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

Megan JM Cook
Mayor



STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

The Honorable Ben Cardin
United States Senate
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 14, 2020

Dear Senators Cardin and Senator Van Hollen:

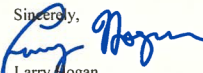
I write to you in support of Maryland's natural resources, and our national treasure, the Chesapeake Bay. The Bay is a powerful economic driver for our State and region, with activities, industries and tourism contributing millions of dollars to our economy each year. The Chesapeake continues to be an important part of our economy, heritage and way of life. Today, we are united in the effort to enhance, protect and restore this resource so that future generations can enjoy both the beauty and bounty of the Bay.

As I have stated previously, I support the creation of a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area, and I encourage you to continue the work of building partnerships and engaging stakeholders, including anglers, business owners, conservationists, and property owners, and craft consensus-based legislation that would establish a National Park Service unit on state property that celebrates and preserves our rich Chesapeake culture, natural resources-based industries, and protects community and state interests.

The National Park System currently includes 419 units of varying designations, including battlefields, monuments, parks and recreation areas. Maryland is fortunate to have several exceptional units located here, like Antietam National Battlefield, Assateague Island National Seashore, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, but there is no one unit devoted solely to the Bay. I believe the Chesapeake Bay is as grand as the Grand Canyon and as great as the Great Smokies, and should be included in a new federal-state partnership.

A Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area would provide an incredible opportunity to showcase Maryland's significant cultural, environmental, historical and natural resources, and provide an international platform for the State of Maryland and the broader Chesapeake Bay watershed. I also believe that the State's outdoor recreation and tourism-based economy would greatly benefit from this designation. As such, my administration would be pleased to continue working with you and others to provide guidance, insight and recommendations for potential locations in and around the region.

I urge you to continue holding discussions with partners and stakeholders, and I hope you consider crafting legislation that would establish a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area. My administration stands ready to assist you in this noble effort.

Sincerely,

Larry Hogan
Governor

cc: Maryland Congressional Delegation

STATE HOUSE, ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
(410) 974-3901 1-800-811-8336
TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Ralph S. Northam
Governor

August 3, 2020

The Honorable Tim Kaine
231 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
703 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kaine and Senator Warner:

As Virginians, we all have a profound appreciation for the Chesapeake Bay. We understand its importance as an economic driver, a biologically diverse and productive ecosystem, and one of our country's greatest outdoor recreation resources. Whether hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, boating, biking or hiking, the Chesapeake Bay watershed is an ideal location. It is for that reason I am writing to encourage you to sponsor legislation that would create a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area with a National Park Service Welcome Center at Fort Monroe National Monument in Hampton, Virginia.

The National Park System includes 419 individual units including national parks, monuments, historic sites, battlefields, recreation areas, and other categories. National recreation areas serve a unique purpose, providing broad public access to exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities usually associated with a single geographic feature. Mount Rogers National Recreation Area in Southwest Virginia is a great example.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States and has been formally recognized by the National Park Service as "unquestionably nationally significant¹." The Bay has been called a national treasure by both Republican and Democratic Presidents. Still, there is no National Park System unit that highlights this exceptional water body and associated landscapes.

Established as an official unit of the National Park System, a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area would elevate the Chesapeake Bay and bring additional national and international recognition. More importantly, it would bring greater National Park Service expertise and resources to the Chesapeake Bay area and restoration efforts, and establish more public access points to the Bay itself. This would increase outdoor recreation tourism in the

¹ Chesapeake Bay Special Resource Study and Final Environmental Impact Statement. National Park Service, 2004.

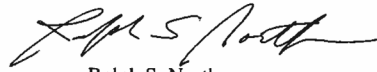
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Mark Warner
August 3, 2020
Page Two

region. Twenty-one National Park units in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania added more than \$801 million to the region's economy in 2018. National Park units in the District of Columbia added an additional \$586 million.² The creation of a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area would likely increase those figures by establishing a major new draw for visitors.

By legislating the creation of a welcome center at Fort Monroe, we would encourage visitors to Virginia, and to the Fort Monroe National Monument, a centerpiece of the Commonwealth's efforts to promote a more just interpretation of Virginia history, and a stunning location on the Bay that is easily accessible to the large and diverse Hampton Roads and Richmond Metro populations. In addition, I encourage you to include in your legislation language to complete the transfer of the 40-acre Wherry Quarter parcel to the National Park Service. This transfer is essential for the long-term protection of the Fort Monroe National Monument and would be an ideal location for the Virginia Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area Welcome Center.

Designation by Congress of the Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area would be of great benefit to the Commonwealth, our economy, and our ongoing efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake estuary. I urge you to support this important legislative initiative, I look forward to working with you and your staff to win this important distinction for the Chesapeake region.

Sincerely,



Ralph S. Northam

² "Visitor Spending Effects – Economic Contributions of National Park Visitor Spending." National Park Service.
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/socialscience/vse.htm>



February 28, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
 United States Senate
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
 U.S. House of Representatives
 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area
 S.2620 & H.R. 5045*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

The Fort Monroe Authority (FMA) 14 member Board of Trustees is responsible for organizational leadership as Fort Monroe transfers from a historic, decommissioned coastal military post into a contributing Chesapeake Bay regional asset. After public consideration, the FMA Board of Trustees directed the FMA Executive Director to work with federal legislators, the Chesapeake Conservancy, and other parties to participate in the planning of the CNRA as it pertains to Fort Monroe.

To that end, the Fort Monroe Authority hosted a public meeting with Congressman Scott to learn more about the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), as well as seek public input. Together we learned the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world by telling the history of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed. We believe that Fort Monroe is one of the more unique sites where this history can be told.

The northern end of the Fort Monroe National Historic District property is included in the CNRA legislation as well as additional language that supports the creation of a "Gateway to the CNRA" at Old Point Comfort, present day Fort Monroe. The inclusion of this property into the CNRA is important to our efforts to improve awareness of Fort Monroe as well as its links to the earliest history of this land and the establishment of our country. The CNRA legislation increases our ability to succeed on a local, regional, national, and international level.



Thank you once again for introducing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, S.2620 and H.R. 5045. We look forward to Congress establishing this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Glenn Oder", written over a horizontal line.

G. Glenn Oder, FASLA
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

July 14, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
 United States Senate
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
 United States House of Representatives
 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support for Unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area Designation

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes,

I write to you to express my support for your legislation to designate a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System.

As County Executive of Frederick County, I value your efforts to elevate the Chesapeake's unique geographic, historic, and cultural importance, both to the State of Maryland and to the country. Frederick has long been known as a crossroads – geographically forged by the Monocacy River, historically important for its location during the Civil War, and culturally rich in its people beginning with the Piscataway and Tuscarora people and continuing today to attract people from all over the world.

Significantly, your legislation will leverage federal investment that will result in increased interest and activity to the area. While the region and State will benefit from that, it will also be particularly meaningful to those who live and make their living from the national treasure that is the Chesapeake Bay. I am delighted that your legislation aligns to the goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Agreement, helping to ensure that this precious ecosystem remains healthy for all and for generations to come.

Finally, you have thoughtfully ensured robust and sustained public engagement in providing for the creation of an Advisory Commission through which the many and diverse stakeholders can provide input and feedback. While the CNRA will celebrate the diversity of cultures and people who have played a role in shaping the Bay, it will also continue to reflect the values and priorities of local communities.

Thank you for authoring this legislation. I am very pleased to support it.

Sincerely,


 Jessica Fitzwater
 County Executive

FRIENDS *of* PEIRCE MILL

February 6, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

On behalf of the Friends of Peirce Mill (FOPM), I write in support of S. 2620, your bill to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) and to permanently reauthorize the Chesapeake Gateways Network.

The Friends of Peirce Mill is an official philanthropic partner of the National Park Service in Rock Creek Park. We work with NPS and the wider community to preserve, restore, and interpret the last working gristmill in Washington, DC.

By permanently reauthorizing the Chesapeake Gateways Program and doubling the authorized funding level, your bill would strengthen FOPM's work to tell the full story of America, including the development of milling, the role of enslaved people in our region's development, and emancipation through the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862. This bill would also help us use the water-powered gristmill for environmental education, and to inspire the next generation of engineers and inventors.

The Friends of Peirce Mill appreciates your work to advance this critically important bill to protect and interpret the Chesapeake Watershed's outstanding natural, historic, and cultural resources for the benefit of current and future generations. If we may be of assistance, please contact me at angela@friendsofpeircemill.org or 718-208-3161.

Sincerely,



Angela Kramer
Executive Director, Friends of Peirce Mill

cc: The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Mayor Muriel Bowser
Mr. Matthew Frumin, Council Member (Ward 3), District of Columbia
Ms. Janeese Lewis George, Councilmember (Ward 4), District of Columbia
Joel Dunn, President and CEO, Chesapeake Conservancy
Jeanne Braha, Executive Director, Rock Creek Conservancy



June 5, 2023

The Honorable Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator
509 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Cardin, Senator Van Hollen, and Congressman Sarbanes:

I write in support of the creation of a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area. The Bay is a powerful economic driver for our State and region, with activities, industries and tourism contributing millions of dollars to our economy each year. The importance of the Bay to Marylanders identity and way of life lends itself as a prime candidate for the National Park Service to designate it as a new federal-state partnership.

The National Park System (NPS) currently includes 419 units of varying designations, including battlefields, monuments, parks and recreation areas. Maryland is fortunate to have several exceptional units, like Antietam National Battlefield, Assateague Island National Seashore, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, and the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, but there is not one unit devoted solely to the Bay.

A Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area would provide an incredible opportunity to showcase Maryland's significant cultural, environmental, historical, and natural resources, and provide an international platform for the State of Maryland and the broader Chesapeake Bay watershed. I encourage you to continue the work of building partnerships and engaging stakeholders to craft consensus-based legislation that would establish a NPS unit on state property that celebrates and preserves the Chesapeake Bay.

My Administration has worked to preserve our waterways by funding instrumental programs to help enhance and protect the Chesapeake Bay, while prioritizing environmental justice for the low-income communities and communities of color. Historically, these communities in the Chesapeake region often suffer disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards. A NPS

designation would help reduce these barriers and provide greater access to all the Chesapeake Bay has to offer while coordinating with local communities to support their needs. I look forward to continuing this partnership and working with you to provide guidance, insight, and recommendations for potential locations in and around the region.

I look forward to working together in the effort to enhance, protect and restore this resource so that future generations can enjoy both the beauty and bounty of the Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. Moore', with a stylized, flowing script.

Wes Moore
Governor of Maryland



200 West Main Street, Salisbury, Maryland 21801

June 16, 2023

Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

On behalf of the 100+ members of the Greater Salisbury Committee, I write to you today to express our full support for the proposal to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA).

In short, this is a brilliant idea. We thank you and your colleagues in the House of Representatives and in the United States Senate for bringing this forward.

The CNRA will elevate the Chesapeake Bay by bringing additional local and national recognition to the region and making substantial contributions to our regional economy. The environmentally conscious tourism that the CNRA would spark will go a long way to supporting local restaurants, outdoor recreation, and tourism based activities.

By building on the legacy of the National Park Service - preservation, conservation, and stewardship - the CNRA would protect the natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and educate the next generation of stewards in the process. Data suggests that national park visitors make a significant contribution to the nation's economy and, especially, to gateway communities in and adjacent to these areas. In 2021, the National Park Service reported that visitors spent \$20.5 billion in local gateway regions while visiting national parks. The staggering number of jobs, and the billions in economic output that the National Park Service adds each year is something that the CNRA could build upon.

We realize that the CNRA concept is just getting off the ground, but we would be remiss if we didn't encourage that some designated location/historical site on the Eastern Shore of Maryland be an original member – if you will – of the CNRA.

Thank you for letting us offer our words of support for the proposed CNRA.

Sincerely,

Mike Dunn

mdunn@greatersalisbury.org

410-742-5161

July 6, 2023



The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Hispanic Access Foundation, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Hispanic Access Foundation is a national 501c3 nonprofit with a long history of working with the Latino community in California. Our mission is to elevate Latino voices, connect Latinos with opportunities, and improve lives for a more equitable society.

This bill is essential to closing the Nature Gap -- the lack of parks, nature and green space within communities of color and low-income communities. Throughout the Chesapeake watershed, communities of color are more than three times as likely to live in a nature-deprived area than white communities. The Nature Gap has left a legacy of poorer health, higher stress levels, worse educational outcomes, lack of recreation and business opportunities and greater vulnerability to extreme heat and flooding in these nature-deprived neighborhoods. Bills that protect nature close to our communities are critical for closing the Nature Gap and creating equitable access to nature's benefits, as well as honoring our region's diverse heritage.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,



Maite Arce
President & CEO, Hispanic Access Foundation

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



Historic Annapolis, Inc.
James Brice House
42 East Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
410.267.7619
410.626.1030 Fax

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July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
Via Email

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Historic Annapolis (HA), I write to thank you for your leadership and commitment to the creation of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

Since 1952, HA has been an advocate for the built heritage of Annapolis—including views from and to the water. As the stewards of a dozen state-owned historic buildings, we have enjoyed a front row seat where the rivers of Annapolis meet the Chesapeake Bay and have been an active participant in Annapolis' important heritage tourism. HA's mission is to PRESERVE and PROTECT the historic places, objects, and stories of Maryland's capital city, and provide engaging experiences that CONNECT people to the area's diverse heritage.

HA supports the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System. Celebration and stewardship of resources for the benefit of all are core tenants of our work and critical reasons to pass this legislation.

Having been involved in the CNRA working group alongside fellow advocates, we appreciate the lengths to which your staff have gone to keep interested parties and organizations like HA informed and updated. In that regard, we can attest to the thoughtfulness with which outreach has been undertaken to educate the public on the meaning of the proposed bill, to collect and consider public comment, and to allay valid concerns and misunderstandings of citizens.

We trust that as champions of this legislation, you will continue to solicit and weigh the public's concerns—including implications, traffic, oversight, etc.—while continuing to speak on the value and potential of this effort. We share the belief that the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish the CNRA.

Sincerely,


Karen Theimer Brown
President and CEO



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive
cball@howardcountymd.gov

www.howardcountymd.gov
FAX 410-313-3051

July 21, 2023

The Honorable Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Congressman John Sarbanes
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area designation

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes:

I am delighted to express Howard County's strong support for legislation that would designate a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System. The proposed CNRA is the product of extensive stakeholder engagement across the region. It would foster the creation of new partnerships to advance conservation, highlight the historical and national significance of the Chesapeake Bay, and facilitate the delivery of more federal resources to this vital watershed region. This would be very beneficial to our county, state, and region. The CNRA would further celebrate the Bay's diverse cultural and economic history, conserve the Bay's environment, foster public access, and spur economic growth.

Howard County is in the heart of Maryland and our proximity to the Chesapeake Bay is part of our identity. Our community cherishes the Chesapeake Bay. Our government, non-profits, and residents strive to protect the Chesapeake Bay through numerous environmental programs. Although Howard County is not within the specific area designation, we would benefit from the important economic, recreational, and tourism generated from the Chesapeake Bay. As our country's largest estuary, the Bay deserves the distinction and protections that would come with the proposed Chesapeake Bay Recreation Area designation.

Thank you,

Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive



16 SOUTH 17TH STREET | SUITE 100 | RICHMOND, VA 23219 | 804.788.8811 | THEJAMESRIVER.ORG

July 7, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the James River Association, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System. The James River Association is the chief advocate for the James River, a significant watershed in the Chesapeake Bay basin. We are actively working to restore the river's health and connect people to its natural resources and rich history through our programs. The establishment of a national recreation area will help advance our mission and we look forward to working with you to ensure the Chesapeake Bay is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know the Chesapeake Bay is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect



16 SOUTH 17TH STREET | SUITE 100 | RICHMOND, VA 23219 | 804.788.8811 | THEJAMESRIVER.ORG

commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Chesapeake at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites that tell stories of its outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Street".

William H. Street
President and Chief Executive Officer

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Rob Wittman
The Honorable Jen Kiggans
The Honorable Bobby Scott
The Honorable Jennifer McClellan
The Honorable Bob Good
The Honorable Ben Cline
The Honorable Morgan Griffith



235 Sam Michael's Lane
 Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442
 304-728-3207
 fax 304-728-9746
www.jcprc.org

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
 United States Senate
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
 U.S. House of Representatives
 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Jefferson County Parks & Recreation Commission in West Virginia, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. As a county parks & recreation department, our mission is to provide safe public parks for our citizens to recreate, as well as provide quality programs for all ages to enjoy. We are a growing community of 58,000 residents and rely heavily on tourism within our community. We are in the eastern panhandle of WV and have a park located on the Shenandoah River, which brings tens of thousands to its banks each year.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. We look forward to working with you to ensure the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance through inclusion in the National Park System.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.



235 Sam Michael's Lane
Shenandoah Junction, WV 25442
304-728-3207
fax 304-728-9746
www.jcprc.org

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill's introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Myers
Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



June 30, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Latino Outdoors, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Latino Outdoors looks to inspire, connect, and engage Latino communities in the outdoors by embracing cultura y familia. The CNRA offers the continued protection of our public lands, increasing opportunities for outdoor learning, leadership, stewardship; in addition to, relationship building with diverse comunidades across the nation.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Jazzari T. Taylor, MPA
Policy Advocate - Advocate for Equity and the Outdoors
jazzari.taylor@latinooutdoors.org

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



July 7, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway (LSHG), I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

A non-profit certified Maryland Heritage Area located in Harford and Cecil Counties along the Lower Susquehanna River and Upper Bay, the LSHG's mission is to encourage regional economic development through heritage tourism primarily by supporting public recreation efforts, particularly trail development and public water access, historic preservation, cultural interpretation, and conservation efforts.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, Inc.
4948 Conowingo Road • Darlington, MD 21034
410-457-2482 • info@upperbaytrails.com • www.upperbaytrails.com

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,



Brigitte C. Carty
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Maryland League of Conservation Voters recognizes that making the Chesapeake Bay accessible to more people is integral in inspiring support for its protection and long term viability. We support the establishment of this new national recreation area as an opportunity to provide greater access to the Bay and education about its place as an invaluable resource for this region. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. We are also encouraged that the Act clearly protects the interests of commercial and recreational fishers, nor does it alter the jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fisheries and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will ensure visitors from near and far will hear the stories of the nature and history of the Chesapeake Bay area. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed - resources worthy of respect and protection.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Coble', written in a cursive style.

Kim Coble
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin

The Honorable Mark Warner

The Honorable Tim Kaine

The Honorable Bobby Scott

July 7, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

I am personally writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

As a Black woman living in a world where I'm often overlooked, I've felt connected to the natural world in a special way. This is a big reason why I've made it my life's mission to advocate for the appreciation and protection of BIPOC communities and our environment.

The Chesapeake Bay will always have a special place in my heart as I've lived in the watershed my entire life. I'm reminded of the beauty of the watershed daily through the diverse landscapes and people who call them home.

What better way to honor this than to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area for ALL to access and experience the beauty of the land and water that connect us.

I strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. I strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

I endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And I support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. I look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Maya Alexander
mnalex94@gmail.com
(443) 986-0626
107 Community Way, Apt 321
Staunton, VA 24401

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



June 29, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 6,800 members and federated partners working to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic growth and recovery for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

I am writing to express my strong support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) legislation that you have been working diligently to introduce in Congress. As a member of United for a Chesapeake National Recreation Area, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce understands and appreciates the value of designating our Chesapeake Bay region as part of the National Park System. Maryland's Chesapeake Bay boasts a rich history, ecological significance, recreational benefits and valuable resources – all important to increasing public access and fostering economic growth.

A unified designation will provide an opportunity to deliver federal resources to the region, in turn spurring economic growth and prosperity. Chesapeake Bay is a critical gateway and the largest estuary in the nation. This designation will create a draw for visitors to the region, who will make substantial contributions to Maryland's economy. It will also support businesses, especially in lodging, outdoor recreation, travel and food industries. Additionally, the CNRA will create pathways to green careers, utilizing the partnerships between the National Park Service, state and local governments, nonprofits, and private stakeholders.

The CNRA will bring additional local, national and international recognition and will play an integral role as an economic generator. The Chamber recognizes the synergy between environmental stewardship and community engagement, which will enhance investment opportunities that will bring significant benefits to Maryland and its residents. By investing in

MDCHAMBER.ORG

60 West Street, Suite 100, Annapolis, MD 21401 | 410-269-0642



Chesapeake Bay, we can ensure Maryland stands poised to benefit from the jobs and wages created by this national designation.

Thank you for your leadership in advancing this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary D. Kane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mary" being more prominent.

Mary D. Kane
President & CEO
Maryland Chamber of Commerce



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Mobility is Freedom Fund, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Our Fund provides scholarships to Ph.D. candidates who focus on issues surrounding individuals who have limb loss. Recreational opportunities are limited for people with limb loss and discrimination is commonplace. Access the wonders of the Chesapeake Bay will be a benefit to all Americans who have limb loss and other mobility issues. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Dankmeyer, Jr, President
Mobility is Freedom Fund
1750 Tysons Blvd, Suite 1500
McClean, VA 22102
www.thoughtfoundation.org

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

July 10, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

I am writing in support of the proposed legislation creating the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). The CNRA will tell the story of the nation's largest estuary and one of the world's largest environmental restoration efforts. The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure and deserves the respect and recognition this designation will provide.

This designation will provide additional federal resources to the region and generate more economic opportunities for those who work within the CNRA. The CNRA will also allow new sites throughout the region to join the effort on a voluntary basis and will leverage existing sites through partnerships between the National Park Service (NPS) and localities. Because over 90% of the shoreline of the Chesapeake Bay is privately owned, the CNRA will increase access to the Bay by providing pathways for voluntary participation in recreation areas.

The CNRA will tell the story of many of the unsung heroes of the Bay, including the story of the watermen and -women who are essential to the economic success and health of the Bay. It will also help to breakdown racial equity and social justice barriers by highlighting stories that often go untold, those of Indigenous peoples, and free and enslaved Blacks.

Although Montgomery County will not be in the CNRA, Montgomery County is in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and many of its residents use the Chesapeake Bay for recreational opportunities and will benefit from the CNRA.

I commend your leadership in sponsoring this bill, and I strongly encourage Congress to pass the authorization creating the Chesapeake National Recreation Area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marc Elrich".

Marc Elrich
County Executive



Scott Knoche
Director
Morgan State University PEARL
10545 Mackall Road
St. Leonard, Maryland 20685

July 5, 2023

Subject: Support for Chesapeake National Recreation Area

I am writing to express my strong support for a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System. As the Director of the Morgan State Patuxent Environmental and Aquatic Research Laboratory (MSU PEARL), and as a member of the CNRA Workgroup, I have had the privilege of providing modest support with respect to the development and planning of this initiative. It is with great enthusiasm that I offer my support for the CNRA.

The CNRA, championed by Senator Chris Van Hollen and Congressman John Sarbanes, promises to be a wonderful addition to the National Park System. Through broad partnerships with states, localities, and private entities, the CNRA aims to showcase the diverse landscape and national significance of the Chesapeake Bay. Importantly, it will also increase public access to the Bay and foster a culture of stewardship. Moreover, the CNRA will celebrate the stories and heritage of diverse groups, including Indigenous Peoples and free and enslaved Blacks, shedding light on the legacy and impacts of slavery. These considerations make the CNRA an inclusive and meaningful tribute to the region's history.

Further, given my disciplinary expertise in environmental economics, I have conducted extensive research on the economic benefits associated with recreational fishing and boating in the Chesapeake Bay and its connecting tributaries. I understand the tremendous value that the CNRA will bring to coastal communities, both in terms of enhancing equitable access to the Chesapeake Bay and generating economic opportunities. By providing a platform for sustainable tourism, the CNRA will attract visitors, boost local businesses, and support the livelihoods of individuals who depend on the Bay for their economic well-being.

In conclusion, the establishment of a unified CNRA as part of the National Park System is an important undertaking. This initiative will not only preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources of the Chesapeake Bay but also provide a wide range of environmental and



economic benefits. As an advocate for environmental conservation and equitable access, I wholeheartedly endorse the CNRA.

Thank you for your attention. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you require any further information or support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott Knoche".

Scott Knoche
Director
Morgan State University PEARL



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes,

Since our creation in 1919, the non-partisan National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) along with our 1.6 million members and supporters, including over 150,000 in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, has worked to protect and enhance our country's national parks for present and future generations.

On behalf of NPCA, I'm writing to thank you both for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park system in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As an organization who has worked to protect and establish national park units in iconic American landscapes—from Glacier to the Great Smoky Mountains and Everglades—we believe this legislation holds immense promise for the conservation and enjoyment of the Chesapeake region's nationally significant natural and cultural treasures.

The Chesapeake Bay is a vital ecosystem, rich in biodiversity and steeped in history that stretches back to the early Paleo-Indians over 10,000 years ago. The establishment of a National Recreation Area would provide much-needed recognition within the National Park System and encourage new partnerships between local, state, and federal entities for further protection of Chesapeake Bay shoreline and expanded public access. These resources would offer enhanced recreational opportunities for local community residents and visitors alike, fostering a deeper connection to nature and encouraging sustainable outdoor recreation.

A Chesapeake National Recreation Area would complement existing efforts to enhance the Bay's health and expand public access, such as the Chesapeake Bay Program and Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. By coordinating management of the National Park Service programs within one unit, this legislation would establish a framework for collaborative stewardship that would make it easier to create partners and provide funding to local and state partners.

The establishment of a Chesapeake National Recreation Area would also have a significant economic impact. National parks and protected areas consistently generate substantial economic activity, supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and attracting tourism revenue. This new, forward-thinking national park unit will focus on

partnerships that will enhance consistent interpretation of the Bay's ecology, Indigenous cultures, and provide resources to educational partners for programming that contributes to the vitality of the entire region.

We support the acquisition of land and land-based resources to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. We also support the requirements that nothing in this legislation would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish authority of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

We applaud your leadership, as the process to inform this legislation as been a fantastic model of collaborative, community-driven conservation. We appreciate your transparent approach and willingness to review and listen to the thousands of comments and robust feedback from not only your constituents, but from those who live and work throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

For a generation, voices throughout the watershed have called for a national park unit for the Chesapeake Bay and this legislation represents a crucial step towards achieving this goal. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and urge other members of Congress to both visit the Chesapeake Bay and support the establishment of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area to further protect the Bay for future generations.

Sincerely,



Edward Stierli
Mid-Atlantic Senior Regional Director



July 5, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

I am writing to you on behalf of National Park Trust to thank you for your leadership and sponsorship of the legislation to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

We are currently celebrating our 40th anniversary of service with continued strong pursuit of our mission to “preserve parks today and create park stewards for tomorrow.” We work to acquire land important to national parks *and* provide children, many of them from underserved schools, opportunities to visit and learn about and love our nation’s parks. We also invest in outdoor programs for and in support of military families, as thanks for their dedicated service to our Nation.

We are a national parks charity headquartered in Maryland, and constantly see and appreciate first-hand the importance of our National Park System to Americans as classrooms and places of enjoyment where treasured memories with friends and family are created. Preservation and protection of these natural, cultural and historical resources are key to our physical and spiritual survival. In view of that, we are particularly honored to have the opportunity to be involved in and to strongly support the establishment of the CNRA. As we have previously commented, our hope is that Holly Beach Farm, a jewel on the Bay, will eventually be included as part of the new recreation area. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

The incredible ecosystem of the Chesapeake, for the sake of its rich historical, cultural and recreational attributes, needs increased national and international visibility and protection, as contemplated by the CNRA purposes. A national recreation area will serve as a means to draw the public, governments (local, state, federal), underserved communities, businesses and other stakeholders together to celebrate the Bay, to manage and steward it collectively, and to restore and protect the resources, values and sustenance it provides to all.

We add our voice with others to strongly support the goals of the new recreation area in recognition of the Chesapeake's national significance, and to conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

In support of creating the CNRA, we endorse the use of previously acquired interests and rights in land, as well as the acquisition of land and other land-based resources via willing donation, purchases from willing sellers, and/or exchanges or transfers from other federal agencies, or from charities, states or municipalities.

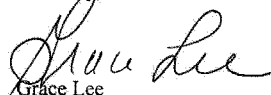
We support requirements in the legislation assuring that it will not impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

As we wrote in our Vision Statement regarding Holly Beach Farm and the CNRA:

Ninety-eight percent of the Chesapeake's shorelines are in private ownership, so few members of the public have the opportunity to hike through its coastal woodlands, experience its marshes and coves, and appreciate the Chesapeake in the same way as waterfront landowners can. These gentle experiences, hiking on trails through woods, watching birds or sunsets, being touched by views of the Bay, and learning about the Bay's history, culture and environment, bring out, in the words of Ken Burns, our "best selves" and also the best in our children. Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

For all of these reasons, thank you for your support and leadership for the CNRA. We look forward to the day when the legislation is fully enacted and to working with state, federal and charitable partners to make it a new, robust and wonderful reality: a national recreation area for and about the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,


Grace Lee
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott

March 13, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515



RE: Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (S.2620 & H.R. 5045)

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

Nature Forward is the oldest independent environmental organization in the DC metropolitan region. For 126 years, Nature Forward has inspired residents of the greater Washington, DC, area to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment through environmental education, advocacy, and outdoor experiences. In our conservation advocacy we prioritize human health & access to nature, biodiversity & habitats, fighting the climate crisis, and sustainable land use.

On behalf of Nature Forward and our 28,000 members and supporters, we thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Nature Forward sees the creation of the CNRA as a benefit for people and the environment. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

WOODEND SANCTUARY, Headquarters | 8940 Jones Mill Road, Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815 | 301-652-9188
RUST SANCTUARY | 802 Childrens Center Road, Leesburg, Virginia 20175



When people get to experience the wonder of a unique, massive estuary like the Chesapeake Bay, they are more likely to respect and protect what they can appreciate. The first step in the process of connecting people to nature is having publicly available spaces with access open to everyone of different abilities and backgrounds. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

Nature Forward serves and works with people of all ages across Maryland, DC, and Virginia. Within Nature Forward's Conservation Department, we have developed and created a watershed advocacy and educational program across the DMV. With the additional access created through this legislation, our members and supporters can expand their environmental exploration beyond just their watershed to connect with people and nature in the core of the Bay watershed.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish the jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.



Thank you once again for introducing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, S.2620 and H.R. 5045. We look forward to working with you to ensure final passage in the Congress to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Lydia Lawrence

Conservation Director

Nature Forward

Denisse Guitarra

MD Conservation Advocate

Nature Forward



Northern Neck PDC

The Regional Center
457 Main Street
P.O. Box 1600
Warsaw VA 22572
(804) 333-1900
(804) 333-5274 Fax
www.nnpdc17.state.va.us

"Serving the counties of Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland"

July 5, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Northern Neck Planning District Commission, thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. The Northern Neck Planning District Commission supports the Northern Neck Tourism Commission, the management entity for the five-county Northern Neck National Heritage Area. The tourism community in the Northern Neck recognizes the importance of waterfront recreation in alignment with the opportunities outlined in the proposed Chesapeake National Recreation Area. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

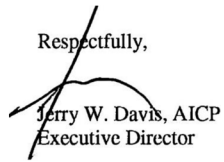
The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish the jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Respectfully,



Jerry W. Davis, AICP
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Rob Wittman

July 5th, 2023

TO: The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

SUBJ: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Park Institute of America, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. As an organization committed to expanding public awareness and access to rich natural and cultural resources, we strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area. Our research examines conservation employment issues and creates tools to help conservation organizations recruit and retain a more diverse workforce. We have found that testimonials from park visitors and conservation practitioners play a key role in attracting a more representative candidate pool, and establishing the CNRA will only amplify those critical voices. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Nearly every member of the Park Institute's board and staff has spent years living and working in the Chesapeake Bay region. We know that the watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish the jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

July 5th, 2023

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on the bill's introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Sammis".

Tyler Sammis
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



July 7, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Potomac Conservancy, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Potomac Conservancy is the region's leading clean water advocate, fighting to ensure the Potomac River boasts clean drinking water, healthy lands, and vibrant communities. With the grassroots power of over 30,000 supporters, we support policy and conservation initiatives that restore the Potomac River and contribute to a healthier Chesapeake watershed. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake Bay is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Hedrick Belin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Hedrick" and last name "Belin" clearly distinguishable.

Hedrick Belin
President
Potomac Conservancy

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



3070 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
202.888.2037 (main)
www.prknetwork.org

July 7, 2023

Senator Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Subject: Support for Senator VanHollen's Sponsorship of Legislation to Establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

I am writing to express our utmost support for your sponsorship of legislation to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area. As the President of the Potomac Riverkeeper Network, an organization dedicated to protecting and preserving the Potomac River and its tributaries, I commend your commitment to providing access to waterways and promoting recreation, as well as your efforts to safeguard the Potomac River, a crucial component of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

The Chesapeake Bay region is a national treasure, cherished for its natural beauty, ecological significance, and cultural heritage. However, the health and vitality of the Chesapeake Bay depend on the health of its tributaries, with the Potomac River being of particular importance. The Potomac River serves as a lifeline for the Chesapeake Bay, supplying vital nutrients and supporting diverse ecosystems that sustain a wide array of plant and animal species.

Your sponsorship of legislation to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area demonstrates your understanding of the paramount importance of protecting and preserving the Potomac River. By designating this area as a national recreation site, we can ensure that future generations have the opportunity to experience the wonders of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay firsthand.

Access to waterways and outdoor recreational opportunities is essential for the well-being of our communities. It provides individuals and families with the chance to engage with nature, improve their physical and mental health, and develop a deep appreciation for our natural resources. The establishment of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area would



Potomac Riverkeeper Network is the trade name of Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc.
a 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization #54-1982624 EarthShare # 87828 * CFC # 87828
Recognized as "one of the best small nonprofits" by the Catalogue for Philanthropy



create a safe and welcoming environment for people to explore and enjoy the recreational opportunities offered by the Potomac River and its surrounding waterways.

Moreover, your legislation aligns with the mission of the Potomac Riverkeeper Network, as it emphasizes the protection and preservation of the Potomac River. By highlighting the importance of this iconic river, you are not only safeguarding its ecological integrity but also contributing to the overall health and resilience of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. Your sponsorship serves as a testament to your dedication to environmental conservation and the well-being of your constituents.

Please be assured of my unwavering support for your efforts, and I encourage you to continue your important work in Congress. By advocating for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, you are not only preserving our natural heritage but also leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.

Thank you once again for your dedication to public service and your commitment to environmental conservation. If there is any way in which I can assist or contribute further to this cause, please do not hesitate to reach out. I am available at your convenience and eager to support your efforts.

With sincere appreciation,

Nancy Stoner

Nancy Stoner
President
Potomac Riverkeeper Network



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. As Maryland's oldest, largest, and most effective preservation organization, we work to protect Maryland's unique and irreplaceable heritage. Establishing the Chesapeake Bay as a National Recreation Area helps to preserve this historic landscape and will celebrate the Bay's diverse history and culture. We thank you for your leadership, and we strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 248, Baltimore, Maryland 21211
o. 410-685-2886 f. 410-539-2182 e. info@presmd.org



Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicholas Redding". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent.

Nicholas A. Redding
President & CEO, Preservation Maryland

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



PRESERVATION VIRGINIA

5 July 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Preservation Virginia, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Preservation Virginia is the nation's first statewide historic preservation organization with members, partners and allies across the Commonwealth. During our 134 year history, we have helped save more than 500 historic places. Our annual Most Endangered list highlights opportunities to preserve historic places. Included in this year's listing were the historic resources associated with the African American Waterman in the Chesapeake region. We championed the establishment of the Fort Monroe National Monument. At Historic Jamestowne, we own the 22 acres where the archaeological remains of 1607 James Fort were found and have jointly managed the Island with the National Park Service for more than 80 years.

The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure. Over the millennium, the abundance and beauty of the Chesapeake Bay has beckoned people to settle in this region and chart our American story. The diversity of the ecosystems with its tributaries, wetlands and forests offers nourishment to the body and soul. And now because of your support, there is an opportunity to connect the history and culture of the region and preserve it for future generations with the creation of the CNRA.

CNRA is a big idea whose time has come. The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. Preservation Virginia joins the growing coalition of preservation, conservation, recreational and environmental organizations in Virginia and Maryland to support this effort.

PRESERVATION VIRGINIA
204 West Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia 23220-5012
preservationvirginia.org 804-648-1889

Sustaining historic places through advocacy, education, revitalization and stewardship.

Establishing the CNRA will raise awareness to connect the historical, cultural, recreational and environmental sites in new and innovative ways. Through collaboration and cooperation, more people will be motivated to learn this history and the nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth S. Kostelny
Chief Executive Officer

cc: The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott
The Honorable Ben Cardin



RAPPAHANNOCK TRIBE OF VIRGINIA

5036 Indian Neck Rd.
Indian Neck, VA 23148
Phone: 804-769-0260
Fax 804-769-9250

E-mail: arichardson@rappahannocktribe.org

G. Anne Richardson
Chief

J. Mark Fortune
Assistant Chief

Faye Fortune
Secretary

Barbara Williams
Tribal Council Chair

Council Members
Teresa Custalow
Col. John Fortune
Kirk Richardson
Vince Reynolds
Reeva Tilley

June 30, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Rappahannock Tribe, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. It is incredibly important for the hidden history of the Native American tribes who lived on the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay to be shared and we believe the CNRA could play a key role in telling that history. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or

diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Anne Richardson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "G. Anne" and last name "Richardson" clearly distinguishable.

G. Anne Richardson, Chief
Rappahannock Tribe

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.) Co-op and our 23 million members, I'm writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. REI has ten retail stores that serve the Chesapeake Bay area and our 700,000 members in Maryland, Washington D.C., and Virginia who want to see more public waterway access. The Co-op is also committed to supporting efforts that increase access to time outside for the 100 million American's that don't currently have easy access to time outside. The creation of a Chesapeake National Recreation Area will provide access to public lands to REI members and future outdoor enthusiasts to recreate. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historical significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake Bay.

Sincerely,

Naz Ahmed (she/her)
Manager, Experiences Mid-Atlantic Region
REI Co-op

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



We inspire, educate and outfit for a lifetime
of outdoor adventure and stewardship.



June 25, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

On behalf of the seven-hundred member businesses of the Salisbury area Chamber of Commerce, a regional Chamber, this letter is in support of the creation of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area.

The creation of this National Area will promote environmentally conscious tourism that in turn will support tourism and the economic impacts that benefit from a robust new national tourism attraction. Lodging, restaurants, outdoor recreation enterprises and the businesses that support those entities will all benefit from this designation.

We all acknowledge the economic benefits our existing National Park visitors contribute to local economies. In 2021 that number exceeded \$20.5 billion dollars and the addition of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area will create jobs, new businesses and generate investment in the communities surrounding this National Recreation asset.

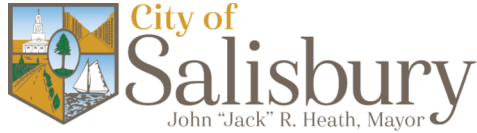
The Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce strongly supports your efforts to establish this National Recreation Area which will foster public access to this national treasure while spurring critical economic growth for the region.

Sincerely,

William R. Chambers
President/CEO

SALISBURY AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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Megan Outten
Salisbury City Council
District 3
443-523-2447
410 Winder Street
Salisbury, MD 21801

Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman John Sarbanes
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

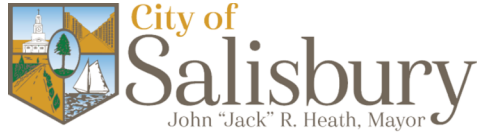
Dear Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for the proposal to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, championed by Senator Chris Van Hollen and Congressman John Sarbanes. As a citizen who deeply values the preservation of our natural heritage, I believe that the creation of this recreation area is an indispensable step in safeguarding the Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding ecosystems for future generations to enjoy.

The Chesapeake Bay holds a special place in the hearts of countless Americans, serving as not only a natural wonder but also as a cultural and historical landmark. It is a sanctuary for an impressive array of plant and animal species, some of which are found nowhere else in the world. By establishing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, we ensure that these critical habitats are protected from the encroachment of development and remain intact for the prosperity of our environment.

Furthermore, this proposed recreation area presents an exceptional opportunity for local communities and visitors alike to connect with nature, engage in outdoor activities, and learn about the rich history and heritage of the Chesapeake Bay region. By promoting responsible recreational use, we can foster a deeper appreciation for the natural world, encouraging conservation efforts and fostering a sense of stewardship among the public.

Salisbury City Council
125 N. Division St., #305 Salisbury, MD 21801
410-548-3140 (fax) 410-548-3781
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Beyond environmental and recreational benefits, the establishment of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area would have a positive impact on the local economy. The tourism and outdoor recreation industries play a crucial role in sustaining livelihoods and supporting small businesses in the area. This protected designation will draw visitors from near and far, creating a boon for local restaurants, hotels, and other enterprises.

The journey to the realization of the CNRA has been long, and I commend the tireless efforts in spearheading this significant initiative. The bipartisan support garnered for this proposal is a testament to the value it holds for all Americans. The Chesapeake National Recreation Area has the potential to become a model for how conservation, cultural preservation, and economic development can work hand in hand.

In closing, I wholeheartedly support the Chesapeake National Recreation Area proposal and urge your efforts in advocating for the Chesapeake Bay Area. This legislation reflects America's commitment to the well-being of our environment and communities. By supporting this proposal, we take a crucial step toward preserving the Chesapeake Bay's unique ecosystem, its cultural significance, and the diverse recreational opportunities it offers.

Sincerely,
Megan Outten
Salisbury City Council

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Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

It is my privilege to provide this letter of recommendation in full support of the establishment of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System. I firmly believe this proposed initiative is a crucial step towards preserving the natural beauty and historical significance of the Chesapeake Bay, while promoting education and providing accessible opportunities for recreational activities to the public.

The Chesapeake Bay is one of our nation's natural treasures and is of vital historical and ecological significance. By designating it as a National Recreation Area, we can ensure that generations to come have the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the unique cultural and natural heritage of the area.

Educational initiatives within the recreation area can serve as a living classroom, inspiring students and visitors to become stewards of the environment. By raising awareness of the delicate balance between human activities and the health of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, the National Recreation Area can foster a sense of responsibility and a commitment to sustainable practices among visitors and local communities.

One of the most compelling aspects of the CNRA is its commitment to providing accessible opportunities for recreation to individuals from all walks of life. With millions of people living just miles from the shores of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, the establishment of this recreation area would serve as a sanctuary for many, offering a multitude of outdoor activities like hiking, wildlife watching, boating, and fishing.

This proposal has the potential for connecting existing local, state, and federal parks and trails, thereby creating an extensive network of accessible spaces that people of all ages and physical abilities can enjoy. By providing



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inclusive facilities and amenities, CNRA will ensure everyone can experience the tranquility and wonder of this breathtaking region.

The creation of the CNRA would be a significant and invaluable addition to the National Park System and will foster a deeper appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the Chesapeake Bay region.

I am pleased and honored to recommend the creation and designation of a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area as part of the National Park System. By preserving this iconic area, we can leave a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy, cherish, and protect.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn R. Lepre".

Dr. Carolyn R. Lepre
President



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Scharle Outdoor Recreation Consulting, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. For many years, I have been saying that the Chesapeake Bay should be known as an international paddling destination, and as the owner and founder of my recreation consulting business, I'm making it my mission to make that happen. Establishing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area will be a big step forward not only by putting the Chesapeake region on the global map for paddling, but it'll garner international tourism of all types to the region, in a sustainable and admirable way. I strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. I strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

I endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And I support the

requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. I look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Laura M. Scharle

Laura M. Scharle
Owner & Founder
Scharle Outdoor Recreation Consulting, LLC

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc.

Hope F. Cupit, CPA
President & CEO



July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP), I am writing to thank you for your leadership in creating the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. Our non-profit serves seven states from Delaware down to Florida, with three of those on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay. Our mission to improve the quality of life for rural communities and residents includes a great deal of technical assistance to communities with water and sewer systems that are adjacent to the Bay. It is in the best interest of our organization and the communities we work with to protect, preserve and celebrate the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. It is an integral part of the area's economy and culture and a most precious natural resource.

We believe the creation of the proposed National Recreation Area will encourage recognition of the Bay's significance and the need to protect it as a central part of the state of Maryland and its history. We strongly support establishing this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.



Water Is Life ®

Phone (540) 345-1184

347 Campbell Avenue, SW
Roanoke, VA 24016
www.southeastrcap.org

Fax (540) 342-2932

We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. We further support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,


Hope F. Cupit (sent 7/2023 13:11 EDT)

Hope F. Cupit
 Chief Executive Officer

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
 The Honorable Mark Warner
 The Honorable Tim Kaine
 The Honorable Bobby Scott

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

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Chair, Public Safety,
Transportation, and Environment

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

Chair, Joint Subcommittee on
Program Open Space/Agricultural
Land Preservation



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 104
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410-841-3578 • 301-858-3578
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Sarah.Elfreth@senate.state.md.us

Senator Christopher Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

July 13, 2023

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write in support of your legislation to designate a Chesapeake National Recreational Area as part of the National Park System. The new system would focus on and amplify the significant and rich natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources of the Chesapeake Bay. With the support of the world's premier park agency, the National Park Service, a Chesapeake National Recreation Area would formally connect parks throughout the Bay and tell a common narrative about the nation's largest estuary and one of the world's largest environmental restoration efforts.

What's more, recent state efforts in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania to significantly increase funding to and focus on rejuvenating parks systems around the watershed makes this the perfect moment for increased federal support and coordination. Here in Maryland, the 2022 passage of the Great Maryland Outdoors Act saw a \$200 million infusion of state funding to expand our State Parks system and prioritize the preservation of land and stories that are paramount to the experience and history of Black Marylanders, including the conservation of the historic Elktonia/Carr's Beach site in Annapolis. Other priorities of the Act included expanding the State Parks system to seek new parks and recreation opportunities in central Maryland, parks that are aligned with public transportation systems in order to increase public access, and parks that open waterfront opportunities for Marylanders to have greater access to their Chesapeake Bay. These policy values - and the national resurgence of public passion for parks and outdoor recreation - align perfectly with your effort to unify these treasured resources through a Chesapeake National Recreational Area.

The formal connection of these treasured areas, the expertise of the National Park Service, the additional federal resources for conservation and public access, and the power of National Park designation and branding would put the Chesapeake Bay on par with other nationally significant landscapes. Additionally, it would boost national and international support for the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.

A Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area is an appropriate and feasible next step for the National Park Service role in the Chesapeake Bay, and would represent a major and permanent victory for partners working to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay. Thank you for championing this critical initiative.

Sincerely,

Senator Sarah Elfleth



July 6, 2023

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The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
RE: *Chesapeake National Recreation Area*

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Shenandoah National Park Trust, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. As the official philanthropic partner of Shenandoah National Park, since 2007, the Trust provides strategic investments in programs and initiatives that help protect, enhance, and preserve the resources of Shenandoah National Park for all to enjoy- for this and future generations. As a current partner to an NPS unit we understand how important protected recreational areas are to our communities and our region. Not only do they provide critical protection of sensitive eco-systems, but they also provide our communities with greater access to the benefits of nature. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

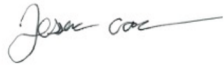
Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Regards,



Jessica Cocciolone
Executive Director





July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives, 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of ShoreRivers, thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education. Access to, and recreational use of, our rivers fuel environmental stewardship and inspires individuals and communities alike to protect the natural resources made available to them. Protecting public spaces like our rivers, parks, and open space is an investment in environmental health, and the health of the individuals and communities who live, work, and play within these places. **Designating the Chesapeake Bay as a National Recreation Area will bring attention to the ecological, cultural, and historical significance of the Eastern Shore's bloodlines—its rivers—while making available federal resources and expertise from the National Park Service to improve public access and increase protection for these natural areas.**

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. **We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.** We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another federal agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the act can impact commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each state, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. ShoreRivers strongly supports the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the national park system.

Sincerely,

ShoreRivers Riverkeepers on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper
Ben Ford, Mile-Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper
shorerivers.org | 443.385.0511 | info@shorerivers.org

Somerset County
Economic Development Commission
11916 Somerset Avenue, Suite 202
Princess Anne, Maryland 21853
www.somersetcountyedc.org

Daniel K. Thompson
Executive Director

June 20, 2023

United States Senator Chris Van Hollen
204 Cedar Street
Suite 200C
Cambridge, MD 21613



Telephone: 410.651.0500
Fax: 410.651.3836
Email: edc@somersetmd.us

Re: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

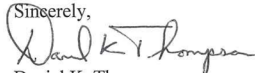
Dear Senator Van Hollen:

As the Executive Director of Somerset County Economic Development (EDC), I would like to submit this letter of support in regards to the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) bill that is currently under public comment and will soon be introduced into legislation.

Somerset County, located on Maryland's Eastern Shore, is bounded by the Chesapeake Bay to the west and Virginia to the south, and is the state's southernmost county. As a water-oriented County, a lot of our local residents make their living working on the water and rely heavily on the Chesapeake Bay. The Tourism industry here on the shore is essential to the quality of life and the attraction of future economic growth. The Chesapeake National Recreation Area will elevate the Chesapeake Bay by bringing additional local and national recognition to the region and making substantial contribution to the economy.

Somerset County is a true waterman's community and relies heavily on the seafood industry. The seafood industry is how the majority of our residents make their living. The CNRA will highlight the key part the Bay played, and continues to play, in the region's economy and the story of watermen and – woman who are essential to the economic success and health of the Bay region. This will spark environmentally conscious tourism that supports those in the food, lodging, outdoor recreation, etc.

Designating a Chesapeake National Recreation Area will bring national recognition to the importance of the Bay and provide resources to support its natural, cultural, historical, and recreational significance. We certainly appreciate all you do for Somerset County and look forward to a favorable outcome. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Daniel K. Thompson
Executive Director

Cc: Ms. Alyssa Hastings, Eastern Shore Regional Director to U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen



The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
US House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Annapolis Maryland Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, I am writing today to thank you for your vision and leadership in convening stakeholders and drafting legislation aimed at creating a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as a part of our National Park System.

As you know, the Surfrider Foundation is a national nonprofit conservation organization based in grassroots awareness and informed local activism and dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans in the interest of all people. Here in Maryland, this includes the national treasure that is the Chesapeake Bay, the largest estuary in the United States and third largest in the world, covering more than four thousand square miles of rivers, creeks, and islands across three states and supporting diverse natural habitats, essential fisheries, and a stunning array of international migratory bird populations.

Creation of the CNRA in partnership with the National Park Service will mark a pivotal and historic moment in Chesapeake Bay conservation. The Surfrider Foundation commends and thanks you for your longstanding efforts to legislate this measure that promises among its many notable benefits the following:

- Creation of federal and inter-state partnerships that will ensure the natural ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay are monitored, cared for, and preserved for the enrichment and enjoyment of future generations in perpetuity.
- Intensified awareness and development of a reciprocal balance between the economic and recreational opportunities afforded by the Chesapeake Bay and the protection required for its sustained health into the future.
- Significant increase in Federal resources and protections supporting initiatives designed to improve the health and longevity of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Increased public access, understanding, appreciation, and therefore stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay and its rich array of habitats, species, histories, and cultures.
- Increased local, national, and international awareness and appreciation of the diverse narrative histories of the Chesapeake Bay including those of the original indigenous peoples of the region; the histories of immigration, colonization, revolution, and democratic independence played out in the region; the important narratives of Black

slavery, emancipation, and Black leadership and culture intimate to the fabric of the region's history; the vibrant histories and cultures of Chesapeake watermen and women so unique and essential to our region and the nation as a whole.

Not least, the CNRA will garner recognition for the Chesapeake Bay and its extensive watershed regions as not merely "notable" and "significant" but as vital, essential, and worthy of protection. The Surfrider Foundation Annapolis Chapter commends you and the rest of the legislative coalition for your vision, tenacity, and commitment and for your willingness to work side by side with our Surfrider Foundation Ocean City Chapter in bringing this important legislation to fruition. This is the brave work of stewardship and we look forward to partnering with you and with the citizens of Maryland to safeguard the legacy of the Chesapeake Bay so that together we can hand this legacy on to future generations.

Sincerely yours,

Amy Adamo
Chair, Surfrider Annapolis
121 Smith Street
207-660-5544

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



July 5, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes,

The Surfrider Foundation would like to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed.

Surfrider is a grassroots environmental organization of 80 chapters, 90 youth clubs, and more than 500,000 supporters, activists, and members in the United States, dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves, and beaches, for all people. We submit these comments on behalf of our local Ocean City, Maryland and Virginia Chapters.

As supporters of sustainable recreation and tourism, and as protectors of coasts and oceans in the Chesapeake region, we wholeheartedly support the goals of the CNRA draft bill celebrating the region's diverse cultural history, conserving the Bay watershed's environmental resources; increasing public access, stewardship, and outdoor recreational opportunities, highlighting the untold stories of the region, and bringing economic resources to the area.

We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network.

We endorse the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

Marina Feeser, Chair
Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation
Chair@oceancity.surfrider.org

Aimee Rhodes, Chair
Virginia Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation
Chair@virginia.surfrider.org

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: *Support for the Chesapeake National Recreation Area*
S.2620 & H.R. 5045

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of the Susquehannock Wildlife Society, Inc., I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. With our mission of protecting local wildlife in the Lower Susquehanna region, where the Chesapeake Bay begins, through research, education, rescue and conservation, we see the incredible potential for an expansion of partnerships to tell the stories of the Bay and its inhabitants, both human and wildlife alike. We believe there is immense value in connecting and expanding on protected places, promoting educational centers like our soon to be opening Wildlife Center in Harford County, and providing new places for the public to access our lands and waters under the celebrated National Park brand. We strongly support the establishment of this new National Recreation Area, including the acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency.

The Chesapeake watershed contains some true ecological jewels that the CNRA will no doubt help to highlight, advocate for, while connecting the public and most importantly, protecting. From the Maryland Darter and Chesapeake Loggerhead, both found nowhere else in the world, to the globally rare Bog Turtle, and all of the iconic Bay species in between, this is a place worth celebrating and providing the necessary resources to ensure it remains healthy for future generations to enjoy.

Thank you once again for introducing the Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act, S.2620 and H.R. 5045. We look forward to working with you to ensure final passage in the Congress to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,
Scott McDaniel
Executive Director
Susquehannock Wildlife Society, Inc.

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



UNITED STATES LIGHTHOUSE SOCIETY

9005 Point No Point Rd. NE
Hansville, WA 98340
Phone: 415-362-7255
Fax: 415-362-7464
www.uslhs.org

July 4, 2023

U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen
Congressman John Sarbanes
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Honorable members of the Senate and Congress,

I am writing to express our support of the Chesapeake National Recreation Area proposed legislation. Since the United States Lighthouse Society restoration began in 2007, we have worked tirelessly to restore and maintain Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse and open the facility for public tours.

The CNRA will enhance the opportunity to showcase the beautiful heritage of the Chesapeake Bay and provide opportunities for more public access to the treasures of the greater Chesapeake Bay area. Through this legacy legislation, the public will have an opportunity to see wonderful experiences and keep our history alive.

For 16 years, over 5,000 people have visited Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse and we look forward to increasing the public exposure to see this National Historic Landmark as well as other great attractions all over the bay.

We are convinced, under the stewardship of the National Park Service, the public will gain enhanced experiences with the bay for generations to come.

John Potvin
Lighthouse Manager
Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse
3805 Thomas Point Rd,
Annapolis, MD 21403

September 28, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes,

On behalf of Trust for Public Land, I would like to applaud your leadership in introducing S. 2620 and H.R. 5045 to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as a unit of the National Park System.

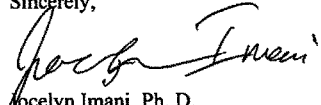
Trust for Public Land is a national 501(c)(3) organization that works to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Since our founding in 1972, we have worked to create new national parks and expand existing units, from large landscapes like Yosemite National Park to cultural and historical centerpieces like Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Site. We also helped to protect and expand numerous sites in the Chesapeake Bay region, including the George Washington Birthplace National Monument in Virginia and Piscataway Park in Maryland.

Trust for Public Land is proud to endorse S. 2620 and H.R. 5045 because we believe that the Chesapeake Bay is nationally significant and deserves this important recognition as a unit of the National Park System. We also believe that the CNRA will help to highlight and preserve the many historical and cultural contributions of Black and Indigenous peoples and communities in the Chesapeake Bay.

America's national parks must tell the full story of our nation. Our National Park System must stretch far beyond monuments to White "Founding Fathers"; the racially and culturally diverse stories told in our national parks must reach far deeper than the history of war, displacement, slavery and segregation. We must work to establish national parks and sites that place Black, Indigenous and other racially and ethnically diverse communities as equal "Founders" and that highlight self-determination, achievement, love and joy.

Thank you for your leadership to introduce, advance and pass this important legislation and we look forward to supporting your efforts to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area.

Sincerely,


Jocelyn Imani, Ph. D.
Director, Black History and Culture
Trust for Public Land



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE
Office of the President

July 25, 2023

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes,

I write to enthusiastically endorse the legislation you are about to introduce that would designate a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System. For those of us living and working on the Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake Bay, we believe that it's a natural and economic resource that's almost without compare in this beautiful country.

As a proud 1890 Land Grant HBCU University on the land of the Nanticoke, those of us at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore understand the impact that the Chesapeake Bay has on the lives of millions of people. The Bay plays prominently in the history of legacy watermen, the abundant agricultural products in this region, the water quality of the Eastern Seaboard, the tourism and recreational opportunities on the Delmarva Peninsula, and for emerging aquaculture opportunities and green careers for our students everywhere.

At UMES, our students and scientists are researching the impact of climate change, of landowner issues, of agricultural sustenance and diversity, and of environmental justice for Native Americans and people of color. The Bay has an impact on each and every one of us.

As such we are grateful to you both and your fellow Congressional colleague sponsors for your leadership and advocacy. Given the many dynamics, legacy, and priceless value of the Chesapeake Bay region for our future the time is NOW to pass this most important legislation. The UMES community stands with your efforts and offer our support to testify. We also invite you and your staff to visit our campus and the UMES Paul S. Sarbanes Coastal Ecology Center on Assateague Island to learn more about the agricultural, scientific, and public policy issues we're working on that support the creation of the CNRA.

We share your desire to have conversations around these issues and find ways to further preserve and maximize this rich resource.

Thank you for including the University of Maryland Eastern Shore in your discussions. We look forward to working with you in your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heidi M. Anderson".

Dr. Heidi M. Anderson
President
University of Maryland Eastern Shore

John T. Williams Hall, Suite 2107 Princess Anne, Maryland 21853-1299 Office: (410) 651-6101 Fax (410) 651-6300
www.umes.edu

December 20, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
 United States Senate
 730 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
 U.S. House of Representatives
 2370 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 20515

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes,

On behalf of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), I write to express our support of legislation that establishes the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). VIMS is one of the largest and most-respected coastal and marine research and education centers in the country and the trusted science advisor to the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries are national treasures that provide jobs, recreation, and critical ecosystem services for millions of people on the eastern seaboard. The bipartisan Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act ([H.R. 5045/S. 2620](#)) recognizes the economic and ecological impact the Chesapeake Bay has both locally and nationally. Establishing the CNRA would allow for additional federal investment and improve public access while spurring economic growth and conserving the environment.

VIMS has a three-part mission to conduct research in coastal ocean and estuarine science, educate students and citizens, and provide advisory service to policy makers, industry, and the public. The CNRA Act would align with our efforts by promoting and conserving the Bay, and expanding learning opportunities for the public with the establishment of a visitor center near Fort Monroe.

Thank you for working on this important legislation. VIMS stands ready to be a resource to you as the CNRA advances through Congress.

Sincerely,



Dr. D. Derek Aday
 Dean and Director of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS)

Cc: The Honorable Mark Warner
 The Honorable Tim Kaine
 The Honorable Bobby Scott
 The Honorable Rob Wittman
 The Honorable Jen Kiggans



July 20, 2023

Senator Chris Van Hollen
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen,

On behalf of Washington College, I want to thank you for this opportunity to support your effort to designate a unified Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA) as part of the National Park System.

The Chesapeake Bay, as the largest estuary in North America, with its extensive marshlands, seagrass beds, and oyster reefs serve as critical habitats for a myriad of plant and animal species. The bay's complex food web and nutrient cycling processes also play a crucial role in maintaining water quality and sustaining the overall health of the region's aquatic life, which support a broad range of social and economic activities. The Chesapeake Bay is thus a valuable scientific laboratory and site of cultural study for our students and faculty at Washington College.

The Bay ecosystem and the people who live within it are a key focus of our Environmental Studies and Science Programs, and our Center for Environment and Society (CES). CES engages nearly 300 undergraduates a year through courses it supports, paid internships it provides at leading regional environmental organizations, research and capstone projects, recreational opportunities, and applied programs with community partners. For instance, our public archeology partnerships and landscape history programs bring to light the past livelihoods of those who came before us — both in prehistory and post-colonial contact — through analysis of cultural material past and present as well as oral histories. Our grassland restoration programs seek to bring back key avian and plant species, and our bird banding station monitors bird populations along a critical migratory pathway. We currently co-own conserved lands on the banks of the Chester River with private landowners that make up one of the largest conservation easements in the state of Maryland. CES's full immersion, experiential learning program the "Chesapeake Semester," and summer field courses, "Headwaters to Bay" and "Black Life in Bellevue," make use of many sites around the Bay.

Washington College's Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience likewise centers much of its work on the distinctive history and identity of the Chesapeake region. Specifically, its major initiative Chesapeake Heartland: An African American Humanities Project, launched in collaboration with the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, works to define the Chesapeake Bay watershed as a national heartland of Black heritage, with a four-century legacy that stretches from the first enslaved Africans' arrival in 1619 to the present. Here, on the shores of the Chesapeake, a distinctively African American culture first developed and grew — folkways and foodways, faith practices, musical legacies, and artistic traditions that have left deep

imprints on broader American culture — and where some of the nation's greatest freedom fighters — Frederick Douglass, Henry Highland Garnet, Harriet Tubman, Thurgood Marshall — were born and launched their struggles. This Black legacy is embodied not just in the Bay region, but also within countless large and small communities across the watershed. The Starr Center's work to uncover, preserve, curate, and interpret this history has engaged Washington College students, faculty, and staff in collaboration with hundreds of community members across the Upper Eastern Shore and beyond. The Chesapeake Heartland Project has drawn national attention and material support from the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the state of Maryland, and others. Historians at the Starr Center would also be ready to work to help connect new sites — especially sites significant to African American heritage — to the CNRA.

In summary, the proposed Chesapeake National Recreation Area would give the Washington College community of students, staff, and faculty the opportunity to broaden our areas of inquiry and expand experiential learning, public education, and community engagement to highlight the estuary's ecological, cultural, and historical significance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mike Sosulski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Mike Sosulski
President
Washington College



P.O. Box 11075
Takoma Park, MD 20913
(800) 995-6755
www.waterkeeperschesapeake.org
CFC#: 31891

July 6, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Sarbanes
U.S. House of Representatives
2370 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area

Dear Senator Van Hollen and Representative Sarbanes:

On behalf of Waterkeepers Chesapeake, I am writing to thank you for your leadership to create the Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA), a new unit of the National Park System in the Chesapeake watershed. We are a coalition of seventeen Waterkeepers working to make the local waters of the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays swimmable and fishable as well as accessible to all within the watershed, regardless of their status. We strongly support the establishment of this new national recreation area, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the Chesapeake is recognized for its natural and historic significance by inclusion in the National Park System.

Those of us who live and work in this region know that the Chesapeake Bay watershed is a natural wonder fully deserving of national park status. We strongly support the goals of the new recreation area to recognize the Chesapeake's national significance, conserve and interpret these resources, expand public access, enhance tourism and local economies, engage watershed communities, promote diversity and equity, improve water quality, and advance the conservation goals of the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. As Waterkeepers, we are dedicated to ensuring that our communities have access to local waterways and the Bay. The CNRA would be a significant step forward in access to and conservation of our water resources.

We endorse the fair acquisition of land and land-based resources via willing donation, purchase from a willing seller, and/or exchange or transfer from another Federal Agency. And we support the requirements that nothing in the Act would impact or affect commercial or recreational fishing or enlarge or diminish jurisdiction of each State, with respect to fish and wildlife management.

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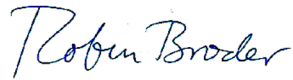
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Establishing the CNRA will allow all stories of the watershed, its citizens, and its history to be shared with visitors from across the world. The creation of the CNRA will enhance public understanding of the Bay and local rivers and wetlands at participating National Park Service sites and partner sites to tell the story of the outstanding, remarkable, and nationally significant resources of the Bay watershed.

Thank you once again for leading this important initiative. We look forward to working with you on bill introduction and final passage to establish this new national recreation area in the Chesapeake.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin Broder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robin Broder
Acting Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Ben Cardin
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Tim Kaine
The Honorable Bobby Scott



November 6, 2023

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
 The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
 The Honorable Alex Mooney
 The Honorable Carol Miller

RE: Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act

The undersigned West Virginia member organizations of the Choose Clean Water Coalition write to make you aware of our strong support for the efforts to designate a Chesapeake National Recreation Area (CNRA). West Virginia Rivers Coalition serves as the Choose Clean Water Coalition Lead in West Virginia, bringing together member groups working to protect West Virginia waters, including those that flow into the Chesapeake Bay. Together, we urge you to consider cosponsoring H.R. 5045/S. 2620, the Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area Act.

Promoting and expanding public access to the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, such as the Potomac, Shenandoah, James, Cacapon and Lost rivers, and many others, are long-standing priorities for the Coalition and our member groups. We appreciate that the legislation does not just focus on the Bay and tidal areas, but clearly states any "significant natural, recreational, historical, and cultural resource" anywhere within the 64,000 square mile six-state Chesapeake watershed could be considered for inclusion in the CNRA. We believe West Virginia has a critical role to play, and local benefits to be gained, in protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a vast and diverse landscape with a population of almost 19 million residents. This legislation recognizes the ecological, cultural, and historic diversity of the region and we support providing and expanding opportunities for recreational access to water in underserved communities, both urban and rural, throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This bill will help to move those efforts forward. We also support the inclusion of the National Park Service's existing Chesapeake Gateways Program which has been providing public access in the entire

Conserving and Restoring West Virginia's Exceptional Rivers and Streams

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Chesapeake Watershed, including in West Virginia, since its initial creation by Congress in 1998.

We strongly support efforts to create a Chesapeake Bay National Recreation Area Act (CNRA) and we appreciate the opportunity to add our voices from the headwaters of the Potomac and James rivers, and beyond. Thank you for the opportunity to relate our support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Blue Ridge Watershed Coalition
Cacapon Institute
Canaan Valley Institute
Friends of the Cacapon River
National Parks Conservation Association
Potomac Conservancy
Potomac Valley Audubon Society
Save Our Soils
Sierra Club, West Virginia Chapter
Sleepy Creek Watershed Association
Sweet Springs Resort Park Foundation Inc.
Sweet Springs Watershed Association
The Downstream Project
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper
West Virginia Citizens Action Group
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy
West Virginia Land Trust
West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I want to thank the many organizations and individuals who contributed their time and energy to turning an idea into a bill—the bill that is before the Subcommittee today.

I know some of you are here in the room, and I thank you for your unwavering support. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Daines, I also want to thank the National Park Service and the agency's partnership in developing this initiative and for the invaluable technical assistance provided by Wendy O'Sullivan from the NPS Chesapeake Bay Office. Our working group, the 74 groups who wrote letters of support for this initiative, and the many others who have supported this project have made it what it is today. They have refined and improved it from the initial concept.

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, members of the Committee, thank you for the time to testify here today, and I urge your support for this legislation. Thank you.

Senator KING. Thank you, Senator Van Hollen.

The process you described to develop this legislation sounds like a model of local input, and I appreciate the work that has gone into getting us to the bill that we have before us today. Thank you for that work.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you. Thank you for recognizing that it was an exhaustive process of public input. Thank you.

Senator KING. Senator Lankford.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES LANKFORD,
U.S. SENATOR FROM OKLAHOMA**

Senator LANKFORD. Chairman King, thank you. Ranking Member Daines, I appreciate the time to get a chance to be in front of you today to be able to speak in support of Senate bill 3543. It is a bill to establish the Historic Greenwood District–Black Wall Street National Monument in the State of Oklahoma.

I would like to ask unanimous consent to submit a letter of support from the Historic Greenwood District–Black Wall Street National Monument Coalition into the record.

Senator KING. Without objection.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you.

[Letter of support for S. 3543 follows:]

**TESTIMONY FROM THE HISTORIC GREENWOOD DISTRICT - BLACK WALL
STREET NATIONAL MONUMENT COALITION**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS**

[S. 3543](#)

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the testimony of the Historic Greenwood District-Black Wall Street National Monument Coalition in support of Senator Lankford and Senator Booker's bipartisan legislation, S. 3543, a bill to grant national monument status to Greenwood, Oklahoma, popularly known as Black Wall Street. This national monument seeks to honor the accomplishments of Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District and commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. We believe it would help catalyze the resurgence of this economic and cultural hub after the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre gutted one of the most remarkable success stories that America has ever seen.

Establishing the Historic Greenwood District - Black Wall Street National Monument as part of the National Park System is long overdue. In 2005, President Bush issued [a National Park Service Reconnaissance Study](#), which determined that the district impacted by the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre is a site of national significance. The survey cited it as "an outstanding example of a particular type of resource" and reported that it "possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our national heritage."

We, the Historic Greenwood District - Black Wall Street National Monument Coalition, could not agree more with NPS' assessment. Our coalition is composed of more than ten Greenwood-based organizations and an advisory council of proud Americans who descend from 1921 Massacre survivors. Although diverse in our racial backgrounds, professions, and political beliefs, we're united by our concern that a federal monument dedicated to the Historic Greenwood District is urgently overdue.

May 31, 2024, marks 103 years since the start of a ruthless effort to wipe Black Wall Street off the map -- and a state-sponsored campaign to erase it from America's memory. With one voice, we stress to this subcommittee that the time is now to help us preserve the rich heritage and lessons that make this community such an indelible part of our nation's story.

On May 31-June 1, 1921, tens of thousands of white people launched a mob attack on Greenwood. The atrocity, known as the Tulsa Race Massacre, resulted in 35 city blocks burned to the ground; approximately 300 Black people murdered; and 10,000 others displaced from their homes overnight. The destruction of Greenwood -- an attack where perpetrators dropped bombs from the air, shot children dead, and plundered the life savings of hard-working families - is considered one of the worst incidents of racial violence in U.S. history.

To know the history of this beloved district is to understand why momentum is growing behind the call for federal protection. Innovators, titans of industry, and Americans of all stripes continue to draw lessons and inspiration from Tulsa, Oklahoma's Greenwood District, where affluent Black families bravely defied the odds in the age of Jim Crow. At a time where virulent

racial hostility and structural barriers limited Black people's full and fair participation in society, Greenwood stood out. Founded in 1906, the community became home to so many African American entrepreneurs, professionals, and property-owners that people coined it "Black Wall Street."

Just a few generations removed from slavery, these intrepid Black pioneers turned a barren patch of Oklahoma into an enclave where capitalism was at its most effective and also its most ethical, and where family values flourished. The community's Black-owned hospitals, movie theaters, libraries, shops, and eateries told a new and exciting story about the possibilities of American prosperity.

But some people rejected the idea that descendants of enslaved people could ever be equal under the law, and eventually took matters into their own hands. In 1921, in less than 24 hours, a white mob assisted by white local authorities burned the community of Greenwood to the ground, killing Black residents and forcing thousands to flee for their lives. Black civilians ran through hailing bullets and the thick smoke of the fires to escape the violence. While many Black residents valiantly fought back against the invasion, they were vastly outnumbered. Over 1,000 homes and almost every structure in the commercial district were destroyed. The remaining houses had been forcefully looted. After the violence, Greenwood residents found themselves homeless and their community gone.

Despite the historical magnitude of the Tulsa Race Massacre, far too few people realize that such an attack on American citizens ever occurred. To this day, the majority of Oklahomans themselves have never heard of this act of domestic terror in their own backyard. In fact, during a recent Oklahoma Supreme Court oral arguments hearing for the case of *Randle et al v. City of Tulsa et al* ([April 3, 2024](#)), Justice Yvonne Kauger - [a fourth generation Oklahoman](#) - said "When I went to high school, I knew about the Trail of Tears...Prohibition...but Greenwood was never mentioned."

This systemic dissimulation is by design. The destruction of Black Wall Street was followed by a massive cover up orchestrated by Tulsa's elites. Bodies were dumped in unmarked graves, news coverage was suppressed, and a code of silence was imposed on the community for generations to come.

The comprehensive campaign to bury Greenwood and the tragedy of the 1921 Race Massacre also led to the erasure of its triumphs. For most Americans, the mention of our community does not register at all. As a result, Americans have no clue what our community had and what was lost. Nor do they know about the valiant, ongoing efforts to rebuild Black Wall Street from the ashes.

We are working hard to do our part in Greenwood. We have, for example, erected a historical marker on Standpipe Hill, allowing visitors to stand on sacred ground once occupied by the affluent families of Black Wall Street. It was also on this hill that brave Greenwood residents, who'd fought in World War I, took up arms to fend off the white mobs so that their neighbors could escape. Designation of the district as a federal monument would provide the community with the national attention and resources needed to preserve Standpipe Hill, and so many of Black Wall Street's other sites of significance.

To deprive generation after generation of the story of Greenwood is to lock away some of the most instructive stories about the importance of self-reliance, the evil of racial hatred, and the beauty of getting within reach of the American Dream. By establishing a monument dedicated to

an iconic community built on hard work and shared values, you would help uncover and expand enthusiastic Black participation in the American Project. Thus, this is not simply a bill to establish a national monument, it's a way to reify the tenets that hold our Republic together, while fostering the cross-cultural dialogues and understanding that bring racial reconciliation.

The designation of the Historic Greenwood District Black Wall Street National Monument is an effort that has long standing bipartisan support. President George W. Bush's administration issued the 2005 study that confirmed the site's cultural value, and in 1997 the Oklahoma State Legislature established a commission that found evidence of a campaign to "cover up" the massacre after it happened. In the 118th Congress, Senators have crossed the aisle to spearhead S. 3543 because the issue is as universal as it is urgent.

The designation is a matter that can't wait for those of us with roots in the community. More than a century after the Tulsa Race Massacre, its absence from curriculums and the nation's consciousness prevents the healing of intergenerational wounds and creates new ones. Many of us in the coalition regret that we couldn't do more to ensure peace of mind for our great grandparents and other family members who survived Black Wall Street's heartbreaking demise. It pained our elders to leave this earth without the comfort and dignity of knowing their community's legacy would be preserved.

Fortunately, there are still massacre survivors who are alive and eager to witness Congress take a historic step toward making the Greenwood community whole. But we're running out of time. Our beloved [Hughes Van Ellis](#), a courageous Tulsa Race Massacre survivor and World War II veteran, passed away in October 2023 at the age of 102, leaving just two survivors behind. Lessie Benningfield Randle is 109, and Viola Ford Fletcher recently celebrated her 110th birthday on May 10, 2024. Before Hughes Van Ellis left us, he spent decades seeking justice for himself and his community, including recently [testifying](#) before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee.

The [pioneers who made Black Wall Street](#), the heroes who survived its destruction, and the people rolling up their sleeves to rebuild it today represent the best of America. Their remarkable work ethic and resilience should be memorialized for all time. You, the distinguished Members of this Subcommittee, can help us properly honor the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street, 103 years after its destruction, finally.

Senator LANKFORD. I do appreciate that some of the leaders that were a part of pulling this letter together and all the work that goes into it are here in the room today as well to be able to be here in support of what is actually happening.

At the end of last year, Senator Booker and I introduced a bill to designate the Historic Greenwood District of North Tulsa, Oklahoma, where the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre took place. We wanted to designate that as a national monument. Each year, including in just a very few weeks, on May 31 and June 1, Oklahoma and the nation pause to reflect on the 1921 race massacre that left that community in absolute ruins. Although Greenwood and North Tulsa lost almost everything on those terrible summer days 100 years ago, the community remains relentlessly devoted to turning tragedy into triumph. They remain a beacon for a culture of opportunity and prosperity and they are absolutely committed to the future. While the community is committed to the future, we should, as a nation, also remember our past and learn from it. North Tulsa remains a place of light and hope in the community that show their strength to overcome adversity and work toward reconciliation, which is something our nation should also do and never forget. I am grateful for the tireless efforts of so many in North Tulsa and in our state to make sure our children today and the generations yet unborn remember those lost, and they understand the stain of racism and learn the powerful story of resilience and rebuilding.

It was a great honor to be able to say to people that we have not forgotten about what happened. We have not ignored it. We have not swept it under the rug and pretended that it never happened. In this generation, we remember. We must also work to ensure the story and the history live on and are never forgotten. That is why this bill is so important. It is critical to note that in addition to the hundreds of Black Wall Street residents that were killed, the Greenwood neighborhood was burned to the ground and that almost no substantial structure survived that tragic event just over 100 years ago. This bill delineates the historic boundary of the Greenwood neighborhood as a national monument.

The bill establishes in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a national monument unit of the National Park Service to preserve, protect, and interpret for the benefit of present and future generations resources associated with the historic Greenwood District, Black Wall Street, and the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 and the role of each in the history in the State of Oklahoma and of the United States. This designation will serve as a catalyst for the resurgence of this economy and cultural hub of Tulsa while helping the country understand and learn from our shared history.

With all new things, of course, there are questions. With an area that has already faced so much hardship, it is easy to understand why. This bill ensures that the Secretary can only acquire land or interest in land through donation, exchange, or purchase from a willing seller. We also wrote-in explicit private property protections so there is no change of zoning—no federal control of private land at all. Additionally, the Commission established under the bill will make recommendations to the Secretary for the location of any signage or potential visitor center. The bill includes a narrow waiv-

er of one provision of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which governs the establishment and operation of advisory committees.

Through the legislation, we crafted language that both honors Greenwood's past and protects its future. It is my hope that we can work to ensure that our children do not grow up in a nation that forgets their past but also makes sure it is not repeated again, and to make sure all individuals are recognized and respected and every person has the same opportunity. I have worked with my friends in North Tulsa for years to secure designations on the National Registry of Historic Places and on the Civil Rights Trail. Now we are one step closer to establishing a national monument, not just to the tragedy that was May 31 and June 1 of 1921, but to recognize a thriving community that was there for years and that worked hard to be able to come back and has shown their resilience. The Historic Greenwood-Black Wall Street area in North Tulsa deserves its place among our nation's most significant historic locations.

I look forward to the testimony and I urge support for the bill. Thank you for taking this up.

Senator KING. Senator Lankford, thank you very much for bringing this bill forward and thanks to all those who worked to make it a reality.

Several years ago, I was traveling back home from Eastern Europe and stopped at the Frankfurt Airport, and we had a guide in the airport who was a German citizen who took us around through the airport and got us to the right gate. In conversation with him, he noted that when he was in high school, it was required for every student to visit a concentration camp, for the very reasons that you stated today: sweeping history under the rug is never good. Remembering is always good. And I was very struck by that. In the nation of Germany, which went through that horrendous period, there was no effort to sweep the history under the rug, but indeed, there was an effort to remind its citizens of what can happen and what did happen so that it may never happen again. So thank you again for bringing this bill forward.

We are going to reconfigure the table now for Mr. Caldwell to join us.

Mr. Caldwell, welcome. We are delighted to have you with us. You are a familiar witness to this Committee. Proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR; ACCOMPANIED BY KYM HALL, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Mr. CALDWELL. Thank you.

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on the 24 bills on today's agenda. I am accompanied by Kym Hall, Regional Director for the National Capital Region of the National Park Service. Regional Director Hall is here to help answer any questions you may have about H.R. 4984, which would transfer administrative jurisdiction over the

RFK Memorial Stadium campus from the National Park Service to the District of Columbia.

Because this hearing is also covering the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request for the National Park Service, I am available to answer any questions on that topic as well as on the individual bills on the agenda.

I would like to submit our full statements on these bills for the record and summarize the Department's views.

The Department supports the following bills:

S. 2620, which would establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area as a new unit of the National Park System.

S. 2742, which would designate the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area as a component of the National Heritage Area system.

S. 2784, which would adjust the boundary of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park.

S. 3195, which would designate the General George C. Marshall House as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

S. 3534, which would authorize the Pines Foundation to establish a memorial to AIDS victims at Fire Island National Seashore.

S. 3543, which would establish the Historic Greenwood District-Black Wall Street National Monument, a new unit of the National Park System commemorating the 1921 Tulsa Massacre.

S. 4209, which would provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument by authorizing additional lands, and which includes several other critical new authorities for the monument.

S. 4222, which would adjust the boundary of Mojave National Preserve to include Castle Mountains National Monument.

S. 4227, which would expand the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park.

S. 4259, which would authorize a study of Lahaina for its feasibility and suitability as a National Heritage Area.

H.R. 359, which would establish Fort San Gerónimo del Boquern as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

And H.R. 4984, which would transfer administrative jurisdiction over the RFK Memorial Stadium campus to the District of Columbia for purposes including residential and commercial development.

The reasons for our support of these bills are explained in our full statements. For most of the bills I just listed, we are recommending amendments, and we would be happy to work with the bill sponsors and the Committee on drafting them.

Regarding the remaining bills:

The Department supports the intent of S. 4216, to bring additional recognition, protection, and interpretation to the resources associated with the Ocmulgee Mounds and the Ocmulgee River corridor. The bill seeks to do that by establishing the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve. This unit would be composed of a redesignated Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park and a new Ocmulgee Mounds National Preserve, which would include within it the Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. We recommend amendments that we believe will improve the bill's implementation.

The Department supports the goal of S. 3251, to improve accessibility at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. However, we

have concerns with the bill's specific accessibility requirements. We recommend amendments to require an approach that is consistent with the current National Park Service accessibility plans for the site and to exclude the bill's proposed boundary expansion.

The Department supports the goals of S. 3568 and H.R. 3448 to expand access to the American Battlefield Protection Program. However, we have concerns with the provisions relating to ensuring the continued stewardship of lands that receive federal funding and recommend amending the bill to address those concerns.

The Department appreciates the intent of S. 4129, to assist the establishment of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, but has concerns about it. This bill would direct the Secretary of the Interior to provide a matching grant to the foundation planning to build the library and to enter into agreements to loan, transfer, or convey museum artifacts from Federal agencies to the foundation. We would welcome the opportunity to address those concerns.

Regarding S. 3241, we appreciate the sponsor's interest in designating the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and historic Jefferson College as affiliated areas of Natchez National Historical Park. The National Park Service is conducting reconnaissance surveys on these two areas that we believe will provide valuable information to the Committee. If the Committee decides to act on this bill before the surveys are completed, we would recommend amendments.

The Department defers to Congress and does not object to three bills that would designate visitor centers at national park units for current or past members of the Senate. The bills are S. 3474, which would designate the George J. Mitchell Visitor Center at Acadia National Park; S. 4218, which would designate the Thomas R. Carper Visitor Center at First State National Historical Park; and S. 4228, which would designate the Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center at Joshua Tree National Park. All three Senators have legislative accomplishments that enhance the parks where they would be honored. The National Park Service generally discourages commemorative naming of park features for an individual, except when there is a compelling justification and at least five years have elapsed since the death of the person. However, we recognize that Congress may specifically authorize such recognition.

The Department does not support, in its current form, H.R. 2717, which would require a commemorative work in honor of Medal of Honor recipients to be established in the area designated as the Reserve under the Commemorative Works Act, which covers the National Mall. We strongly support locating this monument in a place of honor and prominence, but not in the Reserve. The Department has worked to protect the Reserve by discouraging the establishment of any new commemorative works within it.

Finally, the Department recommends that the Committee defer action on two bills. One is S. 2742, which would establish the Fort Ontario National Monument as a unit of the National Park System. We are currently conducting a special resource study of the area to determine whether this site would meet the National Park Service's criteria for designation as a new unit. We recommend waiting to act on this bill until the study is completed.

The other is S. 3542, which would expand the boundary of Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish. We recommend waiting to act on this bill until an amendment to the original study for this National Heritage Area is prepared, which will enable the National Park Service to make a determination about whether the proposed addition is appropriate.

In closing, we commend the thoughtful work of all the members who have developed the bills now before you, several of which have been years in the making. We look forward to working with the bill sponsors and the Committee on amendments to address the concerns we have outlined in our full statements. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have on these bills or on the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request for the National Park Service, and Regional Director Hall would be happy to answer any questions on H.R. 4984. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Caldwell follows:]

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 2620, TO ESTABLISH THE CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL RECREATION AREA AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S.2620 to establish the Chesapeake National Recreation Area as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 2620 with amendments. This legislation would increase national recognition and public appreciation of the vitally important natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources associated with the Chesapeake Bay and the role they play in our national identity. We would like to work with the sponsors and the Committee on certain aspects of the legislation that we believe would improve its implementation.

S. 2620 would establish a new unit of the National Park System, the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, that would be administered in coordination with the existing National Park Service (NPS) Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network (Chesapeake Gateways program), an extensive partnership system of multiple sites and programs. The national recreation area would consist of three sites upon enactment—the most northern portion of Fort Monroe National Monument in Hampton, Virginia, which is part of the area known as North Beach; the 18th century Whitehall estate; and the Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse off the coast of Annapolis. The NPS would also be directed to establish three administrative, interpretive, and visitor service sites: one at the 19th century Burtis house in Annapolis; one in historic downtown Annapolis; and one in or around Fort Monroe. The NPS could acquire additional sites or enter into agreements with other entities to partner on the administration of sites that would be added to the recreation area's boundary. An advisory commission would be established that would, among other things, provide recommended site acquisition criteria and specific sites to consider for acquisition.

S. 2620 would also provide for the permanent authorization of the Chesapeake Gateways program, which is a critically important element of this legislation. Since its inception in 1998, the program has been authorized for only a few years at a time. This program operates throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed and serves to identify, conserve, restore, and interpret natural, recreational, historical, and cultural resources. It provides technical and financial assistance to both the public and private sectors and has since 2000 provided over \$26 million in financial assistance across the watershed. Over 200 sites are now part of this network. We note that permanent authorization of the program was recommended in the NPS's 2004 special

resource study of the Chesapeake Bay. The Department not only supports the permanent authorization of this program, which would remove the uncertainty about its future but also recommends removing the bill's annual appropriation ceiling to help ensure its continued success as costs increase over time.

While the Department supports the continued activity of the Chesapeake Gateways program throughout the entire 41 million-acre Chesapeake Bay watershed, we believe that the scope of the proposed national recreation area should be limited to areas in and around the Bay itself. A unit of the National Park System with a more defined geographical range would present a more focused and coherent interpretation of the Bay to the public. It would be more feasible to administer than a unit that could include sites hundreds of miles away from what the public generally considers the Chesapeake Bay. Directly managing park lands and visitor centers involves significantly more staffing, operation, and maintenance costs than operating a program that is based on entering into agreements for sites owned and managed by other entities; this is why we consider managing a partnership program that extends throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed feasible but believe that managing a unit of the National Park System covering the same area would be far more challenging.

Because the NPS already administers many other sites within the watershed and partners with many entities through the Chesapeake Gateways program, there is strong NPS infrastructure throughout the watershed that promotes public understanding and appreciation of the Chesapeake Bay. This bill recognizes the role that existing NPS entities could play in that endeavor by directing the development of an implementation plan to promote understanding of the watershed's resources at other NPS units and partner sites directly associated with the watershed. These sites can help fulfill the bill's goal of promoting public understanding of the Chesapeake Bay while reducing the need for a new national recreation area composed of individual sites throughout the entire watershed.

The bill would authorize the Secretary to acquire lands or interests in lands located outside the boundary of the proposed national recreation area in consultation with the advisory commission authorized by the bill. The advisory commission would be charged with recommending criteria for partner sites and NPS-managed sites, as well as recommending specific sites for addition to the national recreation area. This provision is unusual in terms of the wide latitude it grants the Secretary for acquiring new land and in the role it envisions for the advisory commission in determining what new lands should be acquired. The NPS has long-established guidelines and criteria for evaluating new areas for possible inclusion in the National Park System that are grounded in existing law and policy; these criteria would be appropriate to use and would meet the needs of the proposed national recreation area while maintaining consistency with systemwide land acquisition practices.

The bill would also provide authority for the Secretary to enter into cooperative management agreements with eligible partner sites, among which may be private non-profit organizations or private landowners, for the acquisition of goods and services. Under current law, the NPS has

authority to enter into cooperative management agreements only with other governmental entities. Providing authority to enter into cooperative management agreements with private entities raises significant concerns for management and oversight. The NPS employs a range of mechanisms, such as cooperative agreements, leasing, and contracting, that could be undertaken with private entities to meet the mutual objectives of the NPS and private partner sites.

In the context of providing for coordination between the Chesapeake Gateways program and the Chesapeake National Recreation Area, the bill specifies the location of the headquarters for the national recreation area and appears to specify that the superintendent of the two entities must be the same person. Leaving decisions about the headquarters location and the management structure of the two entities to the NPS would allow for administrative flexibility and improved efficiency over time.

Finally, the bill requires transportation planning to minimize the traffic burden on communities surrounding the sites in the national recreation area. We understand the local concerns that are being considered and addressed by this provision. It is a common practice for the NPS to prepare transportation studies or site-specific transportation plans; however, such work is normally undertaken in the context of the specific needs and priorities of the site. The NPS would like to reserve the ability to determine the need for transportation planning within the national recreation area and, if undertaken, determine its scope.

We appreciate the hard work that has gone into developing a bill that would make the outstanding resources of the Chesapeake Bay more accessible, better protected, and better appreciated by the public. We look forward to helping advance this legislation by working with the sponsors and the Committee on amendments that would address the concerns described in this statement.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 2742, TO ESTABLISH FORT ONTARIO NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 2742, to establish the Fort Ontario National Monument in the State of New York as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department recommends that the Committee defer action on S. 2742 until after the special resource study on Fort Ontario has been completed. This study was authorized by Congress in 2018 (P.L. 115-255) and is currently underway.

S. 2742 would authorize the establishment of the Fort Ontario National Monument as a unit of the National Park System to preserve, protect, and interpret the history of the site, including the history related to the Indigenous peoples who inhabited the area, previous fortifications dating to the French and Indian War, and the housing of refugees during World War II. The bill provides for the unit to be established after the Secretary of the Interior determines that sufficient land or interests in land has been acquired to constitute a manageable park unit. The Secretary, in consultation with the State and the city of Oswego, New York, would determine the boundary of the park and prepare a map within 30 days of establishing the Monument. The bill contains additional provisions that are standard for legislation establishing new park units.

The first Fort Ontario, located on the east side of the Oswego River on high ground overlooking Lake Ontario, was erected by the British in 1755 to bolster defenses along the Great Lakes. The original fort was destroyed during the French and Indian War, and two forts were subsequently built at the site—one during the American Revolutionary War and the other during the War of 1812. The third and current stone star fort was constructed during the 1840s to help guard against hostilities along the border shared by the United States and the British North American Colonies (present-day Canada) and was occupied by the U.S. Army through World War II.

During World War II, Fort Ontario hosted the only emergency shelter for European war refugees on American soil, housing almost 1,000 European war refugees, the majority of whom were European Jews. Also, at the start of World War II, the all-African American regiment known as the "Harlem Hellfighters," the 369th Antiaircraft Artillery Division, trained there.

After the end of the war, many of the fort's buildings were demolished by the US Army before transferring the military reserve to the state of New York. The fort opened to the public as Fort Ontario State Historic Site in 1949. The state historic site encompasses the 19th century star-

shaped fort, historic structures and cemetery, and views of Lake Ontario. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970. Remaining structures of the refugee camp, including the Safe Haven Holocaust Refugee Shelter Museum located in the historic guard house, are located on lands now owned by the city of Oswego within the historic footprint of the 20th century military reserve.

If the Committee decides to move forward with S. 2742 in its current form, we recommend amending the bill to establish the boundaries of the unit before, rather than after, enactment of the bill. We would be happy to provide the committee with a legislative map and recommended language for that purpose.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 2743, TO AMEND THE JOHN D. DINGELL, JR. CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT, AND RECREATION ACT TO DESIGNATE AS A COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA SYSTEM THE FINGER LAKES NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 2743, to amend the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act to designate as a component of the National Heritage Area System the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area in the State of New York, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 2743.

S. 2743 would designate the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area to conserve, enhance, and interpret those nationally significant stories and the natural, historic, scenic, and cultural resources within the Finger Lakes region that illustrate significant aspects of the heritage of the United States. The bill provides that the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area will consist of Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, and Yates Counties in the State of New York. The bill also identifies the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance as the coordinating entity for the National Heritage Area.

The Finger Lakes are a chain of narrow lakes found in west-central New York. The 11 lakes roughly stretch from Syracuse to Rochester and were once north-to-south flowing rivers that were dammed by the retreat of glaciers during the last ice age. The Finger Lakes' 14-county region is important for its continuing agricultural practices, foodways, conservation ethics social movement history, its distinctive regional landscape, and as the ancestral home of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy whose governance model is considered the inspiration for aspects of our federal Constitution and whose nations continue to thrive today.

The National Park Service conducted a feasibility study of the proposed national heritage area pursuant to P.L. 116-9, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which was transmitted to Congress in July 2023. The study identified an assemblage of natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition and are best managed through partnerships such as in a national heritage area. The study area met the ten national heritage area evaluation criteria and therefore is considered appropriate for national heritage area designation.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 2784, A BILL TO AMEND THE DAYTON AVIATION HERITAGE PRESERVATION ACT OF 1992 TO ADJUST THE BOUNDARY OF DAYTON AVIATION HERITAGE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the U.S. Department of the Interior on S. 2784, a bill to amend the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act of 1992 to adjust the boundary of Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park.

The Department supports this legislation with a technical amendment.

S. 2784 amends Section 101 of the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act of 1992 to expand Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park's boundary to include one acre of land. This addition of land contains a parking area that is in need of upgrade and maintenance so that it can safely service the headquarters and one of the park's two visitor centers.

Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park was authorized through the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act of 1992 and was established to honor the lives and achievements of aviation pioneers Wilbur and Orville Wright and of the poet and author Paul Laurence Dunbar. The park's six sites offer visitors the opportunity to experience the historically refurbished Wright brothers' printing office, walk through an original Wright brothers' bicycle shop, see the Wright brothers' third airplane, follow Wilbur and Orville's footsteps at the Huffman Prairie Flying Field, visit Hawthorn Hill (the Wrights' mansion), and experience Paul Laurence Dunbar's last home.

In addition to these historic places, the park manages three visitor centers, one of which would directly benefit from this legislation. By adding the parking lot inside the boundary, National Park Service (NPS) and partner maintenance activities would ensure that visitors to the Wright-Dunbar Interpretive Center enjoy a safe, accessible, and well-maintained parking facility.

Legislation is required for the inclusion of the one-acre lot within the boundary because the park does not have authority to acquire property beyond its legislated boundaries. As a partnership park with assets owned by private and government partners, it has limited access to the minor boundary authorities commonly provided under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. By bringing the land inside the boundary of the park, the National Park Service will be able to use its already established partnership authorities to cover the cost of facility management and maintenance.

The Department notes that the map referenced in the legislation as “‘Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park Proposed Boundary Addition’ and dated February 2023”, is not a National Park Service legislative map. We recommend a technical amendment that replaces this map with a NPS-produced legislative map with a legislative map number. We are happy to work with the Subcommittee on the technical amendment and the legislative map.

Chairman King this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3195, A BILL TO DESIGNATE THE GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL HOUSE, IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA, AS AN AFFILIATED AREA OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3195, a bill to designate the General George C. Marshall House, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 3195.

S. 3195 would designate the General George C. Marshall House in Leesburg, Virginia, as an affiliated area of the National Park System for the purpose of promoting public appreciation of the significant historic contributions made by United States military leader and statesman George Catlett Marshall, Jr. It would name the George C. Marshall International Center as the management entity for the affiliated area and authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical assistance and to enter into cooperative agreements with the Center for the purpose of providing financial assistance for marketing, marking, interpretation, and preservation. Finally, it would direct the Secretary to develop a management plan in coordination with the management entity within three years of availability of funds.

The General George C. Marshall House is the house where General Marshall resided during the prime of his career (1941-1959). The nonprofit George C. Marshall International Center purchased the property in 1995 and opened it to the public in 2005.

In response to a request by Senator Tim Kaine, Senator Mark Warner, and Representative Jennifer Wexton, the NPS conducted a reconnaissance survey of the General George C. Marshall House to explore whether this site would be suitable for designation as an affiliated area of the National Park System.

In order to be eligible for affiliated area status, an area must (1) meet the criteria for national significance, (2) require recognition or assistance beyond that available through other NPS programs, (3) be managed in accordance with policies and standards applicable to units of the National Park System, and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection as documented in an agreement between the NPS and the entity managing the area. The report on the survey, which was transmitted to the requesting Members in April 2023, indicated that the site appeared to meet all of the criteria to be considered eligible for affiliated status and that it was likely that the George C. Marshall International Center would benefit from a formalized affiliation with the NPS.

The General George C. Marshall House offers potential interpretive or educational opportunities on the history of American diplomacy from the unique perspective of chronicling Marshall's rise and expansion of his roles on the national and world stages, and showing how his career mirrored America's rise as a world power. Designation as an affiliated area would recognize the significance of George C. Marshall's prominence as the role of the United States in the world community evolved during the 20th century, a theme that is underrepresented in the National Park System itself. The Department would welcome this designation.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the other members of the Subcommittee have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3241, TO ESTABLISH THE GRAND VILLAGE OF THE NATCHEZ INDIANS AND JEFFERSON COLLEGE AS AFFILIATED AREAS OF THE NATCHEZ HISTORICAL PARK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3241, a bill to establish the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College as affiliated areas of the Natchez National Historical Park, and for other purposes.

The Department appreciates the sponsor's interest in designating the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Historic Jefferson College as affiliated areas of the National Historical Park. The National Park Service (NPS) is currently conducting reconnaissance surveys on both these areas that we believe will provide valuable information to the Committee as it considers this legislation. We anticipate these surveys will be completed in summer 2024.

S. 3241 would establish the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Historic Jefferson College as affiliated areas of Natchez National Historical Park upon the Secretary of the Interior determining that the sites meet the criteria for designation as affiliated areas. The bill would designate the Mississippi Department of Archives and History as the management entity for the affiliated areas and authorize the Secretary to provide technical assistance and enter into cooperative agreements with the management entity to provide financial assistance for the marketing, marking, interpretation, and preservation of the affiliated areas. As affiliated areas, the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Historic Jefferson College would continue under non-federal ownership and management, but the management entity would be required to administer the sites consistent with laws applicable to units of the National Park System.

The Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, located three miles from present-day downtown Natchez, Mississippi, functioned as a political and religious center for the Natchez people during the era of French exploration and colonization along the Mississippi River. The site's three platform mounds, alongside an adjacent ceremonial plaza, and associated habitation areas, signify its role as the political and religious capital of the Natchez Indian chiefdom from the late 17th to early 18th century. Acknowledged for its historical significance, the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1964 and opened to the public as one of Mississippi's first state historic sites in 1975. Spanning 128 acres, the Grand Village site includes a museum and visitor center, a nature trail, and a large archeological site with the three prominent mounds.

Historic Jefferson College was the Mississippi Territory's first institution of higher learning. It commenced operations in 1811, serving as a preparatory school for young white men until the

Civil War. In 1865 and 1866, Jefferson College was briefly used as a part of the Freedmen's Bureau's Washington Home Colony, providing land, rations, medical care, education, and other services to recently emancipated people. The school resumed operations in 1866, following President Johnson's reinstatement of former Confederate landowner rights in the South. In 1893, it was reorganized into Jefferson Military College. It closed in 1964 and in 1971 was placed under the administrative control of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, which opened as Historic Jefferson College State Historic Site in July 1977. Currently closed, the state is planning for its future.

In July 2022, Senator Hyde-Smith requested that the NPS conduct a reconnaissance survey of the two sites to explore the suitability of designating them as affiliated areas. In two separate surveys, the NPS is examining whether the sites would likely meet the NPS's criteria for designation as affiliated areas, including whether they are nationally significant, demonstrate a need for special consideration by the NPS, and are managed by an entity that would agree to manage the site's resources according to the policies and standards of the NPS. The information from the surveys, when finalized, would help inform the Committee in its deliberations on S. 3241.

If the Committee decides to move forward with S. 3241 prior to receiving the results of the reconnaissance surveys, we recommend amending the bill to establish the boundaries of the affiliated areas before, rather than after, enactment of the bill, and to provide for the sites to be affiliated areas of the National Park System, rather than being tied to one specific park unit. We would be happy to provide the committee with legislative maps and recommended language for those purposes.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK
PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING
S. 3251, TO MODIFY THE BOUNDARY OF LINCOLN HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC
SITE IN THE STATE OF ILLINOIS.**

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 3251, a bill to modify the boundary of Lincoln Home National Historic Site in the State of Illinois.

The Department supports the goal of S. 3251 to improve accessibility at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. However, we have some concerns with specific accessibility requirements in the bill that would be extremely difficult and costly to implement and would like to work with the bill sponsor and Subcommittee on critical amendments that would still achieve the overall goal of improving accessibility.

S. 3251 would amend the park's enabling legislation, Public Law 92-127, to include certain lands totaling less than one acre within the boundary. The bill would also require the Secretary of the Interior to modify the intersection at 8th Street and Jackson Street and the area in front of the Lincoln home to provide universal design and accessibility without the use of sloped surfaces.

The Lincoln Home National Historic Site was authorized on August 18, 1971, and formally established on October 9, 1972, to preserve and protect the only home ever owned by President Abraham Lincoln. In total, the buildings included in the park make up four-and-a-half square blocks on 12 acres. The Lincoln Home still stands today with much of the original structure, walls, and foundations remaining.

The National Park Service (NPS) is committed to improving accessibility at Lincoln Home National Historic Site and is presently engaged in a planning effort which takes a holistic approach to accessibility. The plan will address the visitor experience and accessibility of the park, including all walkways and streets and the connections between all visitor destinations. In addition, the project will assess the potential cost of options to the government and the impact to the park's historic resources. In contrast, S. 3251 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to provide universal design and accessibility without the use of sloped surfaces in two park locations. This would require the park to raise the height of certain streets to match the height of the sidewalk. Our planning process thus far has chosen not to pursue this action, as preliminary analysis shows that elevating the street would be a costly undertaking, would not fit with a park-wide approach, and would likely have negative impacts on the historic fabric of the park.

In addition to specifying accessibility requirements for the Lincoln Home, S. 3251 would modify the park's boundary to include the historic Elijah Isles home, an undeveloped lot, and an alley

connecting these properties to the Lincoln Home. The Elijah Isles home was built in 1837 for Elijah Isles, one of the four individuals who founded Springfield, Illinois; while it is an excellent example of Greek revival historic architecture, it does not directly contribute to the Lincoln home story or to the park's mission, it lacks historic context because it is no longer in its original location, and placing it under park management would result in additional deferred maintenance burdens to the park. The NPS also has no need for the undeveloped lot or the alley.

The Department would be happy to work with the bill sponsor and the Subcommittee on amendments that would exclude the boundary expansion and reinforce the bill's intent to improve accessibility at Lincoln Home National Historic Site. We would be pleased to offer language to require a holistic, cost-efficient, and resource-friendly approach, consistent with the plans for the park that the NPS is currently pursuing.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer questions that you or other members of the Subcommittee might have.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK
PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING
S. 3474, TO REDESIGNATE THE HULLS COVE VISITOR CENTER AT ACADIA
NATIONAL PARK AS THE “GEORGE J. MITCHELL, JR. VISITOR CENTER”.**

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 3474, to redesignate the Hulls Cove Visitor Center at Acadia National Park as the “George J. Mitchell, Jr. Visitor Center”.

The Hulls Cove Visitor Center is located off Route 3 in Bar Harbor, Maine, and serves as the main visitor contact station for Acadia National Park (the park). The area is a “first stop” for visitors to learn about the park, plan their visit, and ride the Island Explorer bus.

Senator George J. Mitchell, Jr. served the state of Maine in the U.S. Senate from 1980 to 1995, during which time he championed bills such as Public Law 99-420, which established a permanent boundary for the park, and Public Law 97-335, which included the iconic lands of Isle au Haut within the park’s boundary in 1982.

S. 3474 would designate Hulls Cove Visitor Center or any successor visitor center that serves as the principal visitor center for the park as the “George J. Mitchell, Jr. Visitor Center.” The NPS generally discourages the naming of park features except when there is a compelling justification and at least five years have elapsed since the death of the person. However, we recognize that Congress may also specifically authorize the placement of such recognition. In this instance, the Department defers to Congress and does not object to S. 3474.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3534, TO AUTHORIZE THE PINES FOUNDATION TO ESTABLISH THE FIRE ISLAND AIDS MEMORIAL, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3534, to authorize the Pines Foundation to establish the Fire Island AIDS Memorial, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 3534 with amendments.

S. 3534 would authorize the Pines Foundation to establish and maintain a memorial at Fire Island National Seashore to honor residents of Fire Island who died of AIDS. The legislation would allow the memorial to be located along the walkway between the Fire Island Pines and Cherry Grove and adjacent to the Carrington House. The bill would prohibit the use of Federal funds for the memorial and allow the Director of the National Park Service to accept non-Federal contributions for that purpose. The Pines Foundation is a Section 501(c)(3) affiliate of the Fire Island Pines Property Owners' Association.

The Department supports allowing this proposed memorial to be established within the boundaries of Fire Island National Seashore as an appropriate tribute to the many lives lost to AIDS and the impact that these losses have had on Fire Island, the state of New York, and the nation. We recommend that S. 3534 be amended to be consistent with most other laws that authorize the establishment of commemorative works on National Park Service (NPS) lands, including requiring that the location of the memorial be subject to the approval of the Director of the NPS. Fire Island National Seashore is a low-lying coastal site with most of its resources located on a dynamic barrier island that is currently facing serious issues related to erosion and extreme weather events which will likely increase in the coming decades due to climate change. These vulnerabilities make it particularly important that the NPS have a role in the site selection for a permanent monument on federal lands within the park.

In addition, the Department recommends deleting the provision authorizing the Director of the NPS to accept and expend donations for the purposes of designing, procuring, preparing, installing, or maintaining the memorial, as establishing and maintaining the memorial should be the role of the Foundation, as provided for in Section 4(a).

We would be happy to work with the sponsor and the Committee to develop these amendments.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3542, A BILL TO AMEND THE ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA ACT TO MODIFY THE BOUNDARY OF THE ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 3542, a bill to amend the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Act to modify the boundary of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (NHA), and for other purposes.

The Department recognizes that there could be potential benefits in expanding the Atchafalaya NHA, but recommends that the committee defer action on S. 3542 until such time as the National Park Service (NPS) determines if this proposed expansion is appropriate.

S. 3542 would expand the boundary of the Atchafalaya NHA to include Lafourche Parish and would add one member to the Atchafalaya Trace Commission. The NHA was authorized in 2006, to help preserve the local cuisine, music, traditions, language, and cultural landscapes of the Atchafalaya Basin in south central Louisiana. The area is among the most culturally rich and ecologically varied regions in the United States, home to the widely recognized Cajun culture as well as a diverse population of European, African, Caribbean and Native-American descent. The NHA includes a part of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park, Lake Fausse Pointe State Park, Cypremort Point State Park, a part of Natchez Trace Parkway and National Scenic Trail, and the Atchafalaya Water Heritage Trail. The Atchafalaya Trace Commission was authorized as the management entity of the NHA and is composed of 14 members appointed by the governing authority of each parish within the heritage area.

Prior to beginning any effort to designate an area as a national heritage area, the NPS recommends that a feasibility study be conducted to assess several factors, including: whether the landscape has an assemblage of natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources that, when linked together, tell a nationally important story; whether an organization exists with the financial and organizational capacity to coordinate heritage area activities; and, whether the level of support for designation exists within the region.

A 1998 special resource study found the Atchafalaya Basin to be an outstanding example of a natural resource, possessed exceptional value in illustrating and interpreting many key natural and cultural themes of our nation's heritage, and offered exceptional opportunities for recreation, public use and enjoyment, and scientific study. The NPS recommends that the Commission submit an addendum to the study that includes a boundary justification for the inclusion of Lafourche Parish. The addendum will document that the Commission has reached out to the affected communities and that there is public support for the inclusion of their parish in the

boundary of the NHA. Additionally, the addendum will ensure that the proposed inclusion of the parish supports the original intent of the NHA.

Once the Commission completes the study addendum, the NPS will undertake our evaluation as expeditiously as possible. The NPS recommends that the committee defer action on S. 3542 until the study addendum is completed and the NPS can make a determination on the proposed expansion.

Chairman King, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3543, TO ESTABLISH THE HISTORIC GREENWOOD DISTRICT—BLACK WALL STREET NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3543, a bill to establish the Historic Greenwood District—Black Wall Street National Monument in the State of Oklahoma, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 3543. The bill would establish a unit of the National Park System that commemorates the 1921 Tulsa Massacre, an extraordinarily important event in our nation's history. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss certain provisions of the bill with the sponsor and Committee to ensure successful implementation should it be enacted.

S. 3543 would establish the Historic Greenwood District—Black Wall Street National Monument as a unit of the National Park System to preserve, protect, and interpret resources associated with the Historic Greenwood District, Black Wall Street, and the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921 and their roles in the history of the State of Oklahoma and the United States. S. 3543 would also establish an advisory commission to advise the Secretary with respect to the management and development of the National Monument. The bill includes authorities for land acquisition and administration that are commonly included in legislation establishing a new unit of the National Park System.

The Tulsa Massacre began May 31, 1921, and led to two consecutive days of widespread violence and devastation against the segregated Black community in Tulsa's Greenwood neighborhood, one of the wealthiest Black communities in the nation at that time. Rioters destroyed approximately 70% of Greenwood's residential area and virtually the entire business district. An unknown number of people, somewhere between 36 and 300, lost their lives; more than 700 were injured; and nearly 9,000 African Americans were left homeless.

The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre is commemorated in Tulsa by the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. In 2020, the Secretary of the Interior added this site to the National Park Service (NPS) African American Civil Rights Network in recognition of its significance in shaping our understanding of the history of race relations, racial violence, and the reparative work of reconciliation in the United States. The African American Civil Rights Network includes sites, facilities, and programs that commemorate, honor, and interpret the significant struggle for civil rights in the United States.

In 2005, the NPS conducted a reconnaissance survey of the Tulsa race riot. Despite the substantial loss of historic fabric and setting as a result of the massacre, key historic resources, including the Greenwood Cultural Center, the Mt. Zion Baptist Church (listed on the National Register of Historic Places), the Vernon Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Greenwood Avenue, the Frisco and Santa Fe Railroad tracks, and the site of the Royal Hotel survived. The reconnaissance survey concluded that the 1921 Tulsa race riot, along with its extant resources, is nationally significant.

Although the Tulsa site has not had the benefit of a full special resource study and the public engagement opportunities such a study would provide, discussions over how to memorialize the tragic but critical events that occurred in Tulsa in 1921 have been happening for decades. In addition to the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, there are other existing resources associated with this story that could be preserved, protected, and interpreted by establishing a larger area as a national monument administered by the NPS. The Department believes that it would be appropriate for Congress to move forward to achieve that end.

The Department appreciates and supports the inclusion of 7 descendants as part of the membership of the proposed National Monument Advisory Commission. We note there is ambiguity in the bill as to who should adjudicate the veracity of documentation for lineal descent and the Department is likely not an appropriate adjudicator.

We also note that S.3543 would establish the monument of the National Park System upon enactment. Authorizing establishment of the monument subject to the NPS acquiring or leasing one or more parcels of land to constitute a manageable unit of the National Park System would allow time for the NPS to fund the site, hire staff, and establish a presence to administer the monument.

Finally, we recommend a non-substantive update to the legislative map referenced by S. 3543 to ensure proper formatting.

Again, the Department supports S. 3543, and Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3568 AND H.R. 3448, BILLS TO AMEND CHAPTER 3081 OF TITLE 54, UNITED STATES CODE, TO ENHANCE THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S BATTLEFIELDS.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3568 and H.R. 3448, bills to amend chapter 3081 of title 54, United States Code, to enhance the protection and preservation of America's battlefields.

The Department supports the goals of S. 3568 and H.R. 3448 to expand access to the American Battlefield Preservation Program. However, we have concerns with certain provisions of the bill related to ensuring the continued stewardship of lands that receive Federal funding.

The bills would amend the existing statute to:

- Add "Tribes" and "nonprofit organizations" to the list of entities eligible to receive Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants;
- Clarify that "associated historic sites" in the *Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields* and the *Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States* are ineligible for certain American Battlefield Protection Program grants;
- Extend the eligibility for Battlefield Restoration Grants to all eligible battlefield sites regardless of whether they have previously received Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants; and
- Require the program to submit updates to Congress on the *Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields* and the *Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States* detailing preservation activities, changes in condition, and other developments relating to the battlefields two years after the enactment of the bill and every ten years thereafter.

The American Battlefield Protection Act authorizes the National Park Service to administer the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) to protect battlefields and sites of armed conflict on American soil through technical and financial assistance. The ABPP supports community-driven stewardship of historic resources through four grant opportunities: Preservation Planning, Battlefield Land Acquisition, Battlefield Interpretation, and Battlefield Restoration. These grants are awarded competitively and on an annual basis, except for Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant awards, which are made on a rolling basis throughout the year.

Preservation Planning Grants provide funds from National Recreation & Preservation (Cultural Programs) to State, Tribal, and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions to support preservation and planning projects at historic battlefields and associated sites in the United States. Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant awards are made from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to State and local governments to pay up to 50% of the cost of fee-simple acquisition or easement interest in properties within eligible sites; amounts available vary each year. Interpretation and Restoration grants annually award up to \$1 million each in LWCF funds to pay up to 50% of the cost for States, Tribes, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to interpret and restore “day of battle” conditions, respectively.

The Department would support expanding eligibility for Battlefield Land Acquisition grants to include Tribes if the bill were amended to address any necessary authorizations related to tribal eligibility for LWCF funding, including the necessity of matching requirements. Additionally, we recommend the bill address the feasibility of land transactions and the Federal financial assistance requirements for protective Federal covenants upon lands governed by a sovereign nation.

Regarding the provision of S. 3568 and H.R. 3448 that would expand eligibility for Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants to include nonprofit organizations, the Department would want to ensure nonprofit recipients can guarantee the same degree of permanent protection that is required of State and local governments receiving ABPP funding. The Department appreciates that language was included in H.R. 3448 as amended and passed by the House, and in S. 3568 as introduced, that clarifies that all recipients, including non-profit organizations, would be required to maintain for public recreational use, in perpetuity, any land acquired with these grants, but still has concerns about the enforceability of this requirement as well as other issues related to awarding grants directly to nonprofit organizations.

The bills would also expand the scope of Battlefield Restoration grants which, currently, are only provided for land that has been preserved through a Battlefield Land Acquisition grant. The Department supports the intent of this provision and would note that the ABPP program is currently working to implement an administrative path to address the limitation on eligibility. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss possible conditions that should be required in conjunction with expanding eligibility.

Lastly, the bills would clarify that Battlefield Land Acquisition and Battlefield Interpretation grants are limited to battlefields listed in the previous reports to Congress, specifically excluding non-battlefield “associated historic sites” listed in those reports. It would require the Department to submit updated Battlefield Reports to Congress every 10 years. The Department has no objections to these provisions.

The Department would appreciate the opportunity to work with the bill’s sponsor and the Committee on amendments to address the points raised in this statement.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK
PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING
S. 4129, A BILL TO CONTRIBUTE FUNDS AND ARTIFACTS TO THE THEODORE
ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY IN MEDORA, NORTH DAKOTA.**

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 4129, a bill to contribute funds and artifacts to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota.

The Department appreciates the intent of S. 4129 to assist private efforts to establish a world destination presidential library to honor the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, but has concerns with the bill as introduced. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the sponsors to address those concerns.

S. 4129 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to provide a grant to the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation (Foundation) for the establishment of the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library, to be located in Medora, North Dakota. Grant funds would be used to preserve materials relating to the life of President Roosevelt and to make them available to the public, as well as to provide interpretation and education on the meaning of the life of Theodore Roosevelt. The grant would be subject to a non-Federal matching requirement but otherwise there would be no limit on the amount of funding that could be appropriated for the grant, nor any fiscal year limitation.

The bill would also direct the Secretary to enter into agreements to preserve and exhibit Federal curatorial collections relating to the life and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt at the Presidential Library. The agreements would provide for the loan, transfer, or conveyance from any federal agency to the Foundation of historic, educational, artistic, natural, and other museum artifacts and objects, particularly objects that are not on display to the public.

Theodore Roosevelt served as the Nation's 26th President from 1901 to 1909. Widely considered the "conservationist president," Roosevelt established the U.S. Forest Service, signed into law the creation of five national parks, and signed the 1906 Antiquities Act, under which he proclaimed 18 new U.S. national monuments. From the moment Roosevelt visited North Dakota on a hunting trip as a young man, he fell in love with the Badlands and returned to the area again and again over the course of his life. It was there that his many personal experiences with the land gave rise to the groundbreaking conservation initiatives of his presidency. Roosevelt is now remembered with a national park in his beloved North Dakota, a park that bears his name and honors his legacy.

The Foundation is a nonprofit organization formed in 2014 to plan, build, and oversee operations of the future Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota. The library will

be located near Theodore Roosevelt National Park. While the National Park Service (NPS) looks forward to exploring ways to collaborate with the library, the NPS does not currently have a formal partnership with the Foundation. The Department applauds the mission of the Foundation to build a world class presidential library based on the principles that represent Roosevelt's legacy in the modern world: Conservation, Leadership, and Citizenship. However, the Department has concerns with authorizing a Federal grant for this private entity that would likely draw funding from NPS priorities, including park operations and maintenance.

We recommend that the Foundation explore existing grant programs that can meet its needs. One NPS grant program that the Foundation may be able to successfully leverage is Save America's Treasures. This program funds conservation work on nationally significant collections including artifacts, museum collections, documents, sculptures, and other works of art.

In addition, the Department has concerns about the bill's language requiring the Secretary to enter into agreements to preserve and exhibit Federal curatorial collections relating to the life and legacy of Theodore Roosevelt at the Presidential Library. NPS museums collect objects specific to the mission of the individual parks and interpret those collections in their original context. The collections are site-specific; that is, they pertain to that particular NPS site. These nationally significant collections are essential resources for interpretation, research, and management.

The NPS supports loaning objects that are currently not on display if the loans are consistent with existing law and policy and the borrowing institution meets the conditions as the Secretary deems necessary for the preservation and exhibition of those collections. In keeping with the NPS public trust responsibilities, its museum collections belong to the American public and can never be sold, unlike public and private institutions which sometimes sell or trade artwork to address financial challenges or use funds generated from art sales to reinvest in the museum. We would appreciate the opportunity to work with the bill's sponsor on amendments that would provide the Secretary with flexibility to determine the appropriateness of loaning particular artifacts on a case-by-case basis.

Most presidential libraries and museums, including their collections, belong to the American people and are operated by the National Archives and Records Administration. A presidential library is typically built with private funds donated to non-profit organizations which are formed for the specific goal of building a presidential library and to support its programs. The presidential library is then donated to the Federal government. From its inception, the intention has always been that the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library will remain privately owned. We respect this intent and look forward to exploring ways to collaborate with the Foundation and the future library on mutually identified goals.

The Department defers to other Federal agencies that may have museum collections relating to the life of Theodore Roosevelt for their views on S. 4129.

Chairman King, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 4209, A BILL TO PROVIDE GREATER REGIONAL ACCESS TO THE KATAHDIN WOODS AND WATERS NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE STATE OF MAINE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 4209, a bill to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument in the State of Maine, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 4209 with technical amendments.

S. 4209 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire lands or interests in lands from willing sellers for addition to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument (monument). The lands authorized for acquisition include two parcels adjacent to the monument and roads leading to the monument from the south totaling approximately 2,500 acres. The bill would ensure that outdoor recreation activity, including hunting and fishing, that was in existence before the land was acquired would continue without change.

S. 4209 would also permit the gathering of fiddlehead ferns in the monument for noncommercial personal use. The bill would require the Secretary to collaborate with local communities and Tribal governments on educating the public about the monument's natural environment and history. It would allow the Secretary to conduct noncommercial timber harvests in the monument. In addition, it would require the Secretary to provide safety information and collaborate with stakeholders to ensure safe interactions between visitors and logging trucks, equipment, and operations on roads in or adjacent to the monument. The bill would also authorize the Secretary to acquire or lease not more than 10 acres of land outside the monument boundaries for monument administration and visitor services.

Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument was established by Proclamation 9476 on August 24, 2016, by President Obama. The monument consists of approximately 87,500 acres within a larger landscape where much land is conserved by public and private efforts but where logging remains active. The monument contains extraordinary natural and cultural landscapes including the mountains, woods, and waters east of Baxter State Park, where the east branch of the Penobscot River and its tributaries run freely. The scenery, geology, flora, fauna, and night skies continue to attract people to this area. Native Americans continue to engage with these resources. By authorizing the acquisition of additional lands for the monument and establishing important new authorities, S. 4209 would set the stage for several positive developments for the monument. We would like to recommend further improvements to the bill.

The Department supports the bill's intent to facilitate visitor access from the southern side of the monument, enhancing access from the communities of Millinocket, East Millinocket, and Medway. However, the committee should be aware of potential challenges the NPS might encounter if it sought to acquire the roads authorized for acquisition. The subject roads are part of a larger 2004 Crossing Rights Agreement between upward of 30 groups of local landowners for commercial land management, timber harvesting, and transportation of forest products. Each landowner is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of the roads and is obligated to indemnify and hold the other landowners harmless in the event of damages occurring from the exercise of the crossing rights. Unless a current landowner or another third-party entity agrees to retain those obligations under the Crossing Rights Agreement, NPS may be prevented from acquiring the roads and assuming those maintenance or indemnification obligations because doing so would commit future funding outside of existing appropriations in violation of the Antideficiency Act. Additionally, should a third party retain ownership of the roads and the NPS were able to agree to terms of a lease, there would be opportunities for federal grants that could help with routine road maintenance and repair. The NPS looks forward to working with all parties involved to coordinate ownership interests in a way that ensures NPS has any needed indemnifications before potentially acquiring the land or interest in the land.

The Department appreciates the intent of the bill to maintain existing recreational uses, including hunting and fishing, where those uses currently exist, if lands with those uses are acquired by the NPS. We would like to work with the bill's sponsor and the committee on amendments to provide the NPS with the flexibility to be able to respond to changing circumstances over time in order to allow for consistent management and to reduce confusion for the public.

The Department also appreciates the bill's intent to ensure safe interactions between visitors and logging trucks, equipment, and operations on roads in or adjacent to the monument. We would like to work with the bill's sponsor and the Committee to further clarify the specific limitations on the duties that the bill intends to impose on NPS for ensuring safety on the southern roads that are currently subject to the Crossing Rights Agreement.

We would be happy to work with the sponsor and the Committee to develop these amendments.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 4216, TO ESTABLISH THE OCMULGEE MOUNDS NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S.4216, a bill to establish the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the State of Georgia, and for other purposes.

The Department supports the intent of S. 4216 to bring additional recognition, protection, and interpretation to the resources associated with the Ocmulgee Mounds and the Ocmulgee River Corridor but would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on amendments that would improve the bill's implementation.

S. 4216 would redesignate Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park as Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and authorize the establishment of Ocmulgee Mounds National Preserve, subject to the acquisition of sufficient land to constitute a manageable park unit. The two components would collectively be designated as a single NPS unit called "Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve". Included in the boundary of the preserve would be the Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, which would continue to be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The bill would direct the Secretary of the Interior to enter into an agreement with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation to provide for the co-management of the park and preserve after receiving recommendations for that purpose from an Advisory Council that would be authorized to be established by the bill. The bill contains several other provisions.

The area proposed to be included in Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve would encompass traditional homelands of the Muscogee and other Indigenous peoples, numerous nationally significant archeological sites, diverse wildlife and vegetation communities, and provide expansive recreation and visitor opportunities. Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, situated approximately three miles east of downtown Macon, Georgia, commemorates over 12,000 years of human habitation, spanning from the Paleo-Indian era through the Archaic, Woodland, and Lamar periods, to the historical presence of the Muscogee Creek people. The park's prominent features include Lamar and Mississippian period earth mounds, a colonial trading post, and Civil War earthworks. Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (refuge), located ten miles southwest of Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, conserves the ecosystem of the Ocmulgee River floodplain, featuring mixed hardwood and pine ridges, bottomland hardwood forests, swamp forests, and oxbow lakes. A large part of the area proposed for inclusion in the Ocmulgee Mounds National Preserve is currently under the administrative jurisdiction of the FWS or within the Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge's approved acquisition boundary.

Public Law 116-9, enacted in 2019, redesignated Ocmulgee National Monument as Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park. The designation of “national historical park” fits with the National Park Service’s standard nomenclature for a park that primarily features historic resources. However, the Department understands the intent to expand the park’s boundaries to conserve the area’s diverse natural and cultural resources and rename the park as Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve.

Public Law 116-9 also authorized a special resource study of the Ocmulgee River corridor, which extends from Macon to Hawkinsville. The study, which the NPS transmitted to Congress in November 2023, found that the corridor met the special resource study criteria for national significance and suitability for inclusion in the National Park System, but not feasibility. The study identified many challenges associated with the potential acquisition of private property in the large area evaluated in the study, in part due to existing and expanding development, agricultural and mining activities, and timber harvesting. The Study identified that opportunities to protect and provide access to the significant resources of the corridor exist via partnerships among current land managers using a variety of legal authorities.

While the Department supports the intent of S. 4216, we would like to work with the bill’s sponsor and the Committee to ensure that the lands identified for inclusion in the proposed Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve are feasible for Federal acquisition and align with the distinct laws, regulations, and policies that govern the FWS and NPS. We would also want to ensure that the prohibition on hunting for the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park section of the new unit is explicitly codified in the legislation. Finally, we want to ensure that in addition to the Muskogee (Creek) Nation, all federally recognized Tribes who have a cultural affiliation with the Ocmulgee Mounds region have the opportunity to pursue co-management or co-stewardship agreements with the NPS. We would be pleased to provide amendments for these purposes.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 4218, TO DESIGNATE THE VISITOR CENTER FOR THE FIRST STATE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK TO BE LOCATED AT THE SHERIFF'S HOUSE IN NEW CASTLE, DELAWARE, AS THE "THOMAS R. CARPER VISITOR CENTER".

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 4218, to designate the visitor center for the First State National Historical Park to be located at the Sheriff's House in New Castle, Delaware, as the "Thomas R. Carper Visitor Center".

The Sheriff's House Welcome Center of First State National Historical Park in New Castle, Delaware was formally dedicated on April 27, 2024 after an extensive multimillion dollar rehabilitation effort. The Sheriff's House was constructed in 1857 on the site of the circa 1793 jail, which is all that remains of Delaware's first prison system. The Sheriff's House, the only NPS-owned facility in New Castle, was donated by the State of Delaware in 2013 in connection with the establishment of the First State National Monument by Presidential Proclamation 8944.

Senator Thomas R. Carper has served the state of Delaware in the U.S. Senate since 2001. Senator Carper was instrumental in seeking the creation of First State National Monument in March 2013. In December 2014, Congress passed the legislation he sponsored to redesignate the monument as First State National Historical Park and expand it to include four additional sites: Fort Christina, Old Swedes Church, John Dickinson Plantation, and the Ryves Holt House. Senator Carper continues to be a champion of First State National Historical Park and has diligently worked to support the park's development.

S. 4218 would designate the visitor center for the First State National Historical Park to be located in the Sheriff's House in New Castle, Delaware, or any successor to that visitor center that is constructed after the date of enactment of the Act and serves as the primary visitor center for the park as the "Thomas R. Carper Visitor Center". The NPS generally discourages the naming of park features except when there is a compelling justification and at least five years have elapsed since the death of the person. However, we recognize that Congress may also specifically authorize the placement of such recognition. In this instance, the Department defers to Congress and does not object to S. 4218.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 4222, A BILL TO ADJUST THE BOUNDARY OF THE MOJAVE NATIONAL PRESERVE IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA TO INCLUDE THE LAND WITHIN THE CASTLE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 4222, a bill to adjust the boundary of the Mojave National Preserve in the State of California to include the land within the Castle Mountains National Monument.

The Department supports S. 4222 with amendments.

S. 4222 would modify the boundary of Mojave National Preserve to include the existing Castle Mountains National Monument and direct the Secretary of the Interior to manage the addition as part of the Preserve.

Mojave National Preserve was established by the California Desert Protection Act in 1994. At 1.6 million acres, it is the third-largest unit of the national park system in the contiguous United States. The preserve is an expanse of desert lands that represents a mosaic of three of the four major North American deserts: the Great Basin, Sonoran, and Mojave. Mojave National Preserve protects these desert ecological communities and evidence of a 10,000-year history of human connection with the desert.

Castle Mountains National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation in 2016. The Castle Mountains represent some of the most unique elements of the eastern Mojave Desert and contain Joshua tree forests, unbroken natural landscapes, rare desert grasslands, and rich human history. Castle Mountains National Monument provides a critical linkage for plants, animals, and water between two mountain ranges within the Preserve, the New York Mountains to the northwest and the Piute Mountains to the southeast.

Mojave National Preserve and Castle Mountains National Monument share a boundary and are both under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. The two areas are currently administered as one unit with shared leadership, staff, and budget. S. 4222 would further improve administrative efficiencies and reduce confusion for visitors.

The Department recommends amending S. 4222 to specify that the Castle Mountains National Monument would be abolished upon the land becoming part of Mojave National Preserve. This would eliminate any duplicative or conflicting regulations or guidelines. We also recommend transferring certain important provisions from the Proclamation to the legislation, such as the provision for certain Bureau of Land Management lands to be transferred to the National Park

Service when all mining activity has terminated and reclamation has been completed. The Department would be happy to work with the sponsor and the Committee on amendments to reflect these recommendations.

Chairman King, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK
PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S.
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING
S. 4227, A BILL TO AMEND THE CALIFORNIA DESERT PROTECTION ACT OF
1994 TO EXPAND THE BOUNDARY OF JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK.**

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 4227, a bill to amend the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 to expand the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park.

The Department supports S. 4227 with amendments.

S. 4227 would modify the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park to include approximately 17,842 acres of land in the Eagle Mountains area, adjacent to the park.

In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established Joshua Tree National Monument as a unit of the national park system. The Joshua Tree Wilderness was designated by Congress in 1976. The Monument was enlarged and redesignated as a national park in 1994 by the California Desert Protection Act. Because the park lies at the convergence of the Colorado Desert and the Mojave Desert ecosystems, the park is home to a fascinating diversity of desert plants and animals. Joshua Tree National Park preserves and protects the scenic, natural, and cultural resources representative of the Colorado and Mojave deserts' rich biological and geological diversity, cultural history, wilderness, recreation values, and outstanding opportunities for education and scientific study.

Joshua Tree National Park protects numerous archeological sites associated with the Pinto Culture, one of the earliest prehistoric cultures found in the California desert (7,000–10,000 years old). The park preserves sites and materials associated with at least four overlapping ethnographic native cultures—the Cahuilla, Serrano, Chemehuevi, and Mojave Indians. Other historic sites preserve information on the history of the processing of gold ore, cattle ranching, rustling, and homesteading of the southwestern deserts. The park is located within a three-hour drive of Southern California's urban population centers and over 3 million people per year visit the park.

In 2016, the National Park Service, in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), conducted a study of the proposed expansion area, located in the Eagle Mountains, and found that the lands were suitable for inclusion in Joshua Tree National Park.

Much of the study area was part of Joshua Tree National Monument when the monument was designated in 1936. The presence of patented mining claims containing substantial deposits of iron ore led to the removal of this area for mineral extraction purposes in 1950. The federal

lands that were removed from the monument were transferred to the BLM for administration and a steel corporation operated the Eagle Mountain Mine in this area for several decades.

While some portions of the Eagle Mountain area have been disturbed as a result of mining operations, most of the lands within the proposed expansion area remain undeveloped and in federal ownership. The area contains resources and values fundamental to the established purpose of Joshua Tree National Park. These include desert tortoise and desert bighorn sheep habitat and other habitat types important for maintaining biological diversity and healthy ecosystem function; interconnectivity of California desert lands; wilderness values and accessibility; dark night skies; desert landforms; and recreational opportunities. Historic resources associated with the Eagle Mountain Mine and Townsite, the Colorado River Aqueduct, and General Patton's World War II Desert Training Center may provide opportunities to expand the rich history interpreted at Joshua Tree National Park.

The Department recommends amending S. 4227 to reference an updated legislative map and to require environmental site assessments to be conducted prior to the transfer of the land proposed for addition to Joshua Tree National Park, consistent with the recommendations of the 2016 study. This will allow the NPS to identify hazards and manage health and safety issues that could affect future public use. We would be pleased to work with the sponsor and Committee on a map and amendment language.

Chairman King, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 4228, TO REDESIGNATE THE COTTONWOOD VISITOR CENTER AT JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK AS THE “SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN VISITOR CENTER”.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 4228, to redesignate the Cottonwood Visitor Center at Joshua Tree National Park as the “Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center”.

The Cottonwood Visitor Center is located in the southern part of Joshua Tree National Park, just seven miles north of Interstate 10, and serves as the first contact station for visitors entering the park from the Interstate. The visitor center is the gateway to many hiking trails, including the Cottonwood Springs area. Visitors can learn about the park, plan their visit, purchase park passes, and obtain information on trail conditions, camping availability, and more.

Senator Dianne Feinstein served the state of California in the U.S. Senate from 1992 to 2023. She was the longest-serving female senator in U.S. history. She also served as the mayor of San Francisco from 1978 to 1988. During her time in Congress, Senator Feinstein authored the California Desert Protection Act that created Mojave National Preserve, expanded and redesignated Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Monuments as national parks, and designated over 7 million acres of California desert as Wilderness. She sponsored many pieces of legislation and advocated for the protection of natural areas and the creation of national monuments in California, including the Castle Mountains National Monument, a unit of the National Park System.

S. 4228 would designate Cottonwood Visitor Center as the “Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center.” The NPS generally discourages the naming of park features except when there is a compelling justification and at least five years have elapsed since the death of the person. However, we recognize that Congress may also specifically authorize the placement of such recognition. In this instance, the Department defers to Congress and does not object to S. 4228.

The NPS plans to construct a new visitor center at Cottonwood in future years. If Congress chooses to proceed with S. 4228, the Department recommends the bill be amended to include language noting that any successor visitor center at that location would also be named for Senator Feinstein.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 4259, A BILL TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A STUDY TO ASSESS THE SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING CERTAIN LAND AS THE LAHAINA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 4259, a bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Lahaina National Heritage Area, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 4529 with amendments.

S. 4259 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study, in consultation with appropriate State and local entities, to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating an area in Maui County, Hawai'i as the Lahaina National Heritage Area. The study area would encompass the boundaries of the census-designated place of Lahaina. The study would gather information to help determine whether the area contains an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that represent distinctive aspects of the heritage of the United States; is worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use; and would be best managed through partnerships among public and private entities. The study would include public engagement and be conducted in consultation with the various stakeholders in the area.

The Lahaina census-designated place, located on the northwest coast of Maui, encompasses Lahaina town, Ka'anapali and Kapalua beaches, and the lower slopes of the West Maui mountains. Lahaina has a rich history and was the capital of the Kingdom of Hawai'i from 1820 to 1845. The Lahaina Historic District, which encompasses downtown Lahaina, Front Street, and its vicinity, was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1962. Tragically, in August 2023, the area was struck by one of the deadliest wildfires in U.S. history. The fire destroyed approximately 80% of Lahaina, and over 100 people lost their lives. Several Department bureaus were part of immediate response efforts, including staff from Haleakalā National Park. The fires directly impacted National Park Service employees, and several have familial and community ties to the Lahaina area. The Department, the National Park Service, and Haleakalā National Park will continue to support the long-term recovery efforts of the Maui community.

We would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on an amendment that would identify a local organization in the legislation that would serve as a national heritage area management entity. Identification of a potential local management entity would indicate on-the-ground support and capacity for engaging in the national heritage area feasibility study process. We also recommend an amendment that would explicitly require consultation with State and

local historic preservation officers, State and local historical societies, State and local tourism offices, and other appropriate organizations and governmental entities, on the appropriate timing for initiating the study so as not to interfere with ongoing recovery efforts.

Chairman King, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING H.R. 359, TO ESTABLISH FORT SAN GERÓNIMO DEL BOQUERÓN IN PUERTO RICO AS AN AFFILIATED AREA OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

MAY 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 359, a bill to establish Fort San Gerónimo Del Boquerón in Puerto Rico as an affiliated area of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 359 with amendments. Designating this fort as an affiliated area would provide an appropriate way to assist in the protection and interpretation of an important resource associated with Spanish colonial history in Puerto Rico.

H.R. 359 would establish Fort San Gerónimo del Boquerón (Fort San Gerónimo) as an affiliated area of the National Park System. The bill would designate the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, which currently manages the fort, as the management entity for the affiliated area and authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical assistance and enter into cooperative agreements with the management entity for the purpose of providing financial assistance for the marketing, marking, interpretation, and preservation of the affiliated area. As an affiliated area, Fort San Gerónimo would continue under non-federal ownership and management, but the management entity would be required to administer the site consistent with laws applicable to units of the National Park System.

For 500 years, San Juan, Puerto Rico, played a key role in the European powers' command of the Caribbean as a strategic access point to the Americas. A massive fortification system was built by Spanish military engineers between the 16th and 19th centuries to protect the city. Three of the forts that were part of this system are included in the San Juan National Historic Site (NHS), administered by the NPS. Fort San Gerónimo, also part of this system, is a small, two-level, stone masonry fort listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and is now partially submerged in the Condado Lagoon.

Fort San Gerónimo was the subject of a special resource study conducted by the NPS pursuant to Public Law 111-11, which directed the Secretary of the Interior to determine the national significance, suitability, and feasibility of including the fort and other related resources as part of San Juan NHS and to consider alternative methods and means for the protection and interpretation of the fort. The study examined the fort under both the criteria for a new unit and as an addition to the boundary of San Juan NHS. The study findings were transmitted to Congress in March 2020.

Fort San Gerónimo was found to meet the special resource study criteria for national significance and suitability for establishing the site as a new unit of the National Park System, but not feasibility. Among the numerous aspects of feasibility evaluated, the most prohibitive factor was the high cost of historic preservation treatment to repair and rehabilitate the fort, which is severely deteriorated and in poor condition. As a result of the negative feasibility findings, the need for direct NPS management was not evaluated in detail. The findings were similar when the NPS evaluated the fort specifically for inclusion in the boundary of San Juan NHS. However, the NPS recognizes that there is strong public support and a potential opportunity for enhancing the interpretation and preservation of Fort San Gerónimo. In cases such as this, where resources meet the criteria for national significance and suitability but do not meet other criteria for inclusion in the National Park System, an affiliated area designation may be appropriate. We believe that is the case here.

While the Department supports H.R. 359, we recommend making a technical amendment to section 3(g), providing for the development of a management plan, and deleting sections 3(h) and 3(i), which address private property protection and activities outside of the affiliated area, respectively, both of which we believe are unnecessary. We would be pleased to provide recommended amendments for these purposes.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING H.R. 2717, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MUSEUM FOUNDATION TO ESTABLISH A COMMEMORATIVE WORK ON THE NATIONAL MALL TO HONOR THE EXTRAORDINARY ACTS OF VALOR, SELFLESS SERVICE, AND SACRIFICE DISPLAYED BY MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 2717, a bill to authorize the location of a monument on the National Mall to commemorate and honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients.

The Department strongly supports honoring the extraordinary acts of our Nation's Medal of Honor recipients, and we support establishing the monument authorized for that purpose in a place of national honor and prominence. However, since the establishment of the Reserve by Congress in 2003, the Department has endeavored to protect the Reserve by discouraging the establishment of any new commemorative works within it. It is for that reason that we do not support H.R. 2717 as currently drafted. This position is consistent with other testimony the Department has submitted on legislation that proposes new commemorative works within the Reserve.

H.R. 2717 would authorize the National Medal of Honor Monument to be established in the Reserve, as defined by the Commemorative Works Act (40 USC 89 et seq.) (CWA). The CWA was enacted to ensure that proper consideration is given to authorization, location, and design of new memorials within Washington, DC. Congress amended the Act in 2003, establishing the "Reserve" and declaring it a completed work of civic art where "the siting of new commemorative works is prohibited." The CWA identifies the Reserve as "the great cross-axis of the Mall" which extends from the United States Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, and from the White House to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial.

Legislation to authorize the establishment of the National Medal of Honor Monument was enacted in December, 2021, as Public Law 117-80. This law authorizes the monument to be established on Federal land managed by the National Park Service or the General Services Administration in Washington, DC, in accordance with the CWA. The Department testified in support of authorizing the establishment of the monument with the understanding that the CWA, which includes a prohibition on locating new memorials in the Reserve, would apply.

The Department's concerns about establishing the National Medal of Honor Monument in the Reserve are much the same as those expressed by the Department on similar legislation. Other sponsors of memorials have sought prominent locations as well, and have worked with the National Park Service, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Commission of Fine Arts to secure sites outside of the Reserve that meet their needs. The National Park Service is committed to continuing to work with the sponsors of the National Medal of Honor Monument

to develop a site selection study that would identify a uniquely honorific and distinguished location for this monument that is not in the Reserve.

Congress' 2003 Reserve designation responded to a pressing need to preserve the integrity of the National Mall and rapidly diminishing public space in the city's monumental core. The pressures on the Mall's open space have amplified through time. In addition to hosting over 35 million visits each year, more than 9,000 permitted events, including 1,000 First Amendment demonstrations, take place on or near the National Mall annually. The space is also heavily used for recreational activities, national celebrations, critical operational and security movements associated with its placement at the city center, and park visitation. Maintaining the Mall's open spaces and existing architecture is essential to ensuring that it continues to convey its significance as our nation's premier civic space. We urge the Subcommittee to protect this special place for the enjoyment of Americans for generations to come.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the other members of the Subcommittee have.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING H.R. 4984 – D.C. ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL STADIUM CAMPUS REVITALIZATION ACT.

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 4984, the D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act.

The Department supports H.R. 4984.

H.R. 4984 would amend the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to direct the Secretary of the Interior to transfer administrative jurisdiction of the entire 174 acres of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus (RFK Campus) to the District of Columbia (District) which is currently under a 50-year lease from the National Park Service (NPS) that is due to expire in 2038. This bill would terminate the existing lease and transfer the administrative jurisdiction of the RFK Campus to the District, subject to the execution of a Declaration of Covenants that would provide certain conditions and restrictions required by the legislation. Those provisions include a restriction on the use of Federal funds for stadium purposes on the RFK Campus, additional permitted uses to include commercial and residential development, protections of the riparian area adjacent to the Anacostia River, the inclusion of 30% of the campus for parks and open space, and improved public access.

The RFK Campus sits on land administered by the NPS as part of Anacostia Park. Originally envisioned by the 1901 McMillan Commission as public gardens and recreation space, Anacostia Park was established in 1918 when Congress directed the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the Anacostia River flats and use the fill to create new parkland. In 1924, Congress established what would eventually become the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) which directed the management of Anacostia Park as part of the park, parkway, and playground system of the Nation's capital. In 1933, Executive Order 6166 transferred NCPC's responsibilities for management of the park, parkway, and playground system, including Anacostia Park, to the NPS.

The District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 previously called for transferring the entire RFK Campus to the District following the repayment of the costs to construct the stadium. However, the RFK Campus remained the property of the Federal government. As amended in 1986, the act directed the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to convey ownership of the stadium building only to the District and establish a 50-year conditional lease for the stadium grounds and surrounding parking. The 1986 amendments required that the property be used for the purposes of recreation facilities, open space, and public outdoor recreation facilities in addition to a

stadium. The lease entered into between the NPS and the District pursuant to the 1986 amendments is the lease that is currently in effect.

The lease area is approximately 142 acres, including the 11 acres occupied by the District-owned stadium structure. Under the current law, if the leased property were no longer used for the purposes allowed by the 1986 law and under the lease, the lands would revert to the Secretary to be administered as part of Anacostia Park and the District would bear the costs of removing structures, or rehabilitating the stadium or land, as the Secretary determines appropriate.

The transfer of administrative jurisdiction as directed in H.R. 4984 would present an opportunity for the District to implement its plan to transform the RFK Campus from acres of asphalt to a vibrant new complex focused on community sports, recreation, park space and cultural amenities that will provide city residents with unprecedented access to parks and recreation space. The transfer would protect NPS interests by improving and protecting existing viewsheds to the monumental core and the Anacostia River for those entering the city and recreating in the area. Redeveloping the RFK Campus would also provide an opportunity to improve the site's environmental conditions and help improve the water quality in the Anacostia River.

Additionally, the bill's requirement for parks and open space would complement NPS park land in the immediate vicinity by requiring that a minimum of approximately 42 acres of the site be used for parks and open space for passive and active outdoor recreation. Of particular note, within the vicinity of the RFK stadium campus there is a 32-acre riparian buffer which contains a portion of the Anacostia River Trail and serves as a critical transition from the 142 acres of leased lands to the Anacostia River. This transition zone protects the river from runoff that would otherwise carry sediments and pollutants into the water. It is critical to ensure that this land is maintained as a riparian buffer. While not currently part of the property leased to the District, this area is included in what would be transferred by this legislation.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Caldwell.

Before we begin our questions, I want to thank you, and by extension, all the people that work for the National Park Service for the extraordinary service that they provide to our country. To all the visitors that come, it is so meaningful and so important. And to those of us who have visited a variety of national parks, the people make those special places even more special. So please convey the thanks of the Committee to all of the staff of the National Park Service for the wonderful work that they do.

You testified that you support the legislation I mentioned at the beginning that would improve access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument. If it is passed, the Park Service could then negotiate either to purchase the fee of the road or a right-of-way. Given your experience, how long do these kinds of negotiations usually take?

Mr. CALDWELL. Well, I think each situation is different, but knowing the players that are involved up at this particular unit, I would guess those discussions have already begun, as this legislation was introduced. I don't want to give it a timeline, but certainly, with Katahdin Woods in particular, I think, given the proposed legislation and the access that you spoke to earlier, we realize it is a priority and I know the park staff, the regional staff, and the lands office staff in the Washington Office will take it as a priority.

Senator KING. Well, one of the issues that we want to pay special attention to in this is that this is a logging area.

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes.

Senator KING. And it will remain so, and we want to be sure that the access is safe. And I hope that you can continue to work with the commercial logging community to ensure that there will not be an impedance of their work, but also that visitors can access the monument safely. Can you describe how that process works?

Mr. CALDWELL. Sure, yes. Yes, sir.

We take visitor safety very seriously at all units, and certainly the park works to ensure that visitors are aware of the logging trucks and have the right-of-way on the roads and are aware of the monument. We make sure visitors are aware of this through website work, through brochures, as well as the visitor contacts, the personal contacts that we have in the unit up there.

Senator KING. And that is something that you've been able to do successfully in other parts of the country, I take it?

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Finally, on this bill there is a provision that allows the Park Service to acquire up to ten acres for operations and maintenance. Would this provide sufficient flexibility for you to adequately be able to operate the monument?

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, certainly in that particular unit where we are there to protect the resources—preserve those resources—having the ability to be able to set up administrative facilities on lands outside that particular boundary will be much more conducive to us, to set up that operation and give us an opportunity to make sure those resources we are there to protect stay that way, but also

be able to—whether it is tie-in with local utilities and things like that, it is a wise way to go.

Senator KING. And I want to be clear that what this bill does is provide access. It is essentially a road, either ownership of the road or a right-of-way, not significant additional land added to the size of the national park. We are talking about an access, not additions to the acreage of the—I'm sorry—of the monument.

Mr. CALDWELL. Correct. That is correct. This is about access to the national monument.

Senator KING. Mr. Caldwell, to change the subject, S. 4216 redesignates a historical park as a national park. In looking through the history of what it is you administer, I find 25 different designations for types of units—gardens, preserves, forest parks, mountain parks, three types of battlefields, three historic designations. Is the management of these various assets different according to the title under which it falls? In other words, is a national historic park managed differently than a—

Mr. CALDWELL. Sure, any superintendent, and I speak as a former one, will tell you how they manage starts with the enabling legislation. So whatever the nomenclature of that park is, it is tied into the National Park System where the Organic Act and management policies in that particular enabling legislation will dictate what you do with things like the superintendent compendium and the allowance of different types of uses.

Senator KING. Should we consider talking with you, having a roundtable of some kind to talk about how to perhaps rationalize this process so the public isn't confused as to what's what?

Mr. CALDWELL. I am not sure where you want me to go with that question, but yes.

[Laughter.]

Mr. CALDWELL. I do believe during the centennial there was a discussion, actually, I think it was part of our national systems plan that we transmitted over to this Committee about a year or so ago, there was this discussion about nomenclature, and I think it is a topic that is certainly worthy of further looking at.

Senator KING. I think it's worth our Committee's consideration, just again, to be sure the public—

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, sir.

Senator KING [continuing]. Has some understanding of what these different names and designations mean.

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, sir.

Senator KING. Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Chairman King, thank you.

I have got a couple questions for Mr. Caldwell. Before, I just want to give a brief introduction and overview of some of these bills. There are a lot of important bills that they just went through there, Mr. Caldwell.

Senate bill 3568, the American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act, would improve the protection of American's historic battlefields. I am proud to co-sponsor this bill with Senator Hyde-Smith. I look forward to seeing it signed into law.

Senate bill 4129, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act, would allow the establishment of the Theodore Roosevelt Library in Medora, North Dakota, with Theodore Roosevelt National

Park in Medora, North Dakota, just 30 minutes from Wibaux, Montana. I am excited to hear more about this proposal.

Finally, H.R. 2717, the National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act, would allow the placement of the monument devoted to Medal of Honor recipients on the National Mall. Medal of Honor recipients, through their service and sacrifice, are the highest example of American exceptionalism, and it is important they are honored properly. I know that placing new monuments in the Reserve has been controversial in the past, so I am looking forward to hearing more from the Park Service about their concerns.

Finally, my office has received a number of support letters for various bills on today's agenda. Mr. Chairman, I would ask unanimous consent they be included in today's record.

Senator KING. Without objection.

[The letters referred to follow:]



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DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

KRISTIN P. SANDERS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Senator Bill Cassidy
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

October 1, 2023

RE: Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Boundary Modification

Dear Senator Cassidy,

Today I'm reaching out to you on behalf of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA). The ANHA program, Authorized by Public Law No: 109-338 (Section B) on October 12, 2006, is administered by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism and is made up of 14 parishes in south-central Louisiana. Congress designated the Atchafalaya as a region with significant natural, scenic, cultural, historical and recreational resources that offers a unique blend of European, African, Caribbean and Native American cultures.

The ANHA program works to build understanding and identity, raising local, regional, and national awareness of the Atchafalaya region. Bounded historically by Bayou Teche and Bayou Lafourche, the 14 parishes of the heritage area tell the full story of the Atchafalaya Basin through their cultures and relationship with the water.

One parish that was historically connected to the Atchafalaya Basin was left out of the original designation. Over the last several years there has been a groundswell of support from that parish's administration, community and cultural groups, and educational institutions. We recognize that their desire to be a part of the Atchafalaya NHA program because of their connection to the cultural, natural, and recreational resources of our region is extremely strong and we would be proud to have them included as a part of our program. We ask you to accept this letter of support from the Atchafalaya NHA staff and its Commission for a boundary modification to include Lafourche Parish as part of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Justin Lemoine".

Justin Lemoine, PLA, ALSA

Executive Director, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area



4876 Highway I - Mathews, LA 70375
 P.O. Box 425 - Mathews, LA 70375
 985-537-7603 - FAX 985-532-2845

www.lafourchegov.org

Archie Chaisson, III, *Parish President*

Office of Coastal Zone Management

October 17, 2023

Senator Bill Cassidy
 455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Boundary Modification

Dear Senator, Cassidy,

I wanted to reach out to you on behalf of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA) program administered by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. The ANHA, Authorized by Public Law No: 109-338 (Section B) on October 12, 2006, is made up of 14 parishes in south-central Louisiana. Congress designated the Atchafalaya as a region with significant natural, scenic, cultural, historical and recreational resources that offers a unique blend of European, African, Caribbean and Native American cultures.

The ANHA program, funded by the National Park Service in cooperation with the State of Louisiana works to build understanding and identity, raising local, regional, and national awareness of the Atchafalaya region.

Bounded historically by Bayou Teche and Bayou Lafourche, the 14 parishes of the heritage area tell the full story of the Atchafalaya Basin through their cultures and relationship with the water. Historically connected to the Atchafalaya Basin, one parish was left out of the original designation. We ask you to accept this letter of support from Lafourche Parish Government for a boundary modification to include Lafourche Parish as part of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Dufrene".

Megan Dufrene
 Office Of Coastal Zone Management Administrator
 Lafourche Parish Government

Archie Chaisson, III	Parish President	Jim Wendell	District 5
Jerry Jones	District 1	Terry Arabie	District 6
William "T-Boo" Adams	District 2	Armand Autin	District 7
Michael Gros	District 3	D'lynn Chiasson	District 8
Aaron "Bo" Melvin	District 4	Daniel Lorraine	District 9

CITY OF THIBODAUX

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

P. O. BOX 5418
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THIBODAUX, LOUISIANA 70302
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KEVIN CLEMENT
MAYOR

TELEPHONE: (985) 446-7218
FAX: (985) 446-7247
EMAIL: kclement@ci.thibodaux.la.us

October 17, 2023

Senator Bill Cassidy
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Boundary Modification

Dear Senator Cassidy,

I wanted to reach out to you on behalf of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA) program administered by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. The ANHA, Authorized by Public Law No: 109-338 (Section B) on October 12, 2006, is made up of 14 parishes in south-central Louisiana. Congress designated the Atchafalaya as a region with significant natural, scenic, cultural, historical and recreational resources that offers a unique blend of European, African, Caribbean and Native American cultures.

The ANHA program, funded by the National Park Service in cooperation with the State of Louisiana works to build understanding and identity, raising local, regional, and national awareness of the Atchafalaya region.

The 14 parishes of the heritage area are both culturally and geographically tied to the historic Atchafalaya Basin. When the heritage area was created, a single parish that was part of the historic basin was left out. Please accept this letter of support from the City of Thibodaux for the boundary modification to include Lafourche Parish as the final parish of the ANHA program.

Sincerely,



Kevin R. Clement, Mayor
City of Thibodaux, Louisiana



October 18, 2023

Senator Bill Cassidy
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Boundary Modification

Dear Senator Bill Cassidy,

I wanted to reach out to you on behalf of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA) program administered by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. The ANHA, Authorized by Public Law No: 109-338 (Section B) on October 12, 2006, is made up of 14 parishes in south-central Louisiana. Congress designated the Atchafalaya as a region with significant natural, scenic, cultural, historical and recreational resources that offers a unique blend of European, African, Caribbean and Native American cultures.

The ANHA program, funded by the National Park Service in cooperation with the State of Louisiana works to build understanding and identity, raising local, regional, and national awareness of the Atchafalaya region.

Bounded historically by Bayou Teche and Bayou Lafourche, the 14 parishes of the heritage area tell the full story of the Atchafalaya Basin through their cultures and relationship with the water. Historically connected to the Atchafalaya Basin, one parish was left out of the original designation. We ask you to accept this letter of support from the Thibodaux Chamber of Commerce for a boundary modification to include Lafourche Parish as part of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy T. Ledet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Tammy T. Ledet, IOM
President/CEO

318 EAST BAYOU ROAD, THIBODAUX, LA 70301

Phone: 985-446-1187 • Fax: 985-446-1191 • Web: www.thibodauxchamber.com
E-mail: Info@ThibodauxChamber.com



LOUISIANA
TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION

Re: Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Boundary Modification

Dear Senator Bill Cassidy,

I wanted to reach out to you on behalf of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA) program administered by the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism. The ANHA, Authorized by Public Law No: 109-338 (Section B) on October 12, 2006, is made up of 14 parishes in south-central Louisiana. Congress designated the Atchafalaya as a region with significant natural, scenic, cultural, historical and recreational resources that offers a unique blend of European, African, Caribbean and Native American cultures.

The ANHA program, funded by the National Park Service in cooperation with the State of Louisiana works to build understanding and identity, raising local, regional, and national awareness of the Atchafalaya region.

Bounded historically by Bayou Teche and Bayou Lafourche, the 14 parishes of the heritage area tell the full story of the Atchafalaya Basin through their cultures and relationship with the water. Historically connected to the Atchafalaya Basin, one parish was left out of the original designation. We ask you to accept this letter of support from the Louisiana Travel Association for a boundary modification to include Lafourche Parish as part of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area program.

Sincerely,

Chris Landry
President/CEO

chris@louisianatravelassociation.org

Emmie Fuson
Director of Communications & Advocacy

emmie@louisianatravelassociation.org

ADVOCACY | EDUCATION | PROMOTION

4100 S. Sherwood Forest Blvd. Ste. 202 | Baton Rouge, LA 70816 | 225-346-1857 | louisianatravelassociation.org

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

23 February 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Leader McConnell,

We write to urge that the Senate swiftly consider H.R. 2717, the *Hershel “Woody” Williams National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act*. This bill, which passed unanimously in the House of Representatives both in Committee and on the Floor, would locate a monument to America’s Medal of Honor recipients in a prominent location within the Reserve of the National Mall. It’s a designation that would reflect the level of supreme national and historical importance of the Medal of Honor – the highest recognition bestowed upon our military service members for valor in combat – and its recipients.

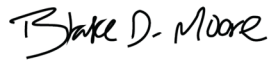
Since its creation during the Civil War, more than 40 million individuals have served in the United States Armed Forces, but fewer than 4,000 have been awarded the Medal of Honor. Across the decades, the meaning behind the Medal has never tarnished and the values each recipient displayed have remained constant: citizenship and patriotism, commitment and integrity, courage, and sacrifice. They all share a deep love of country and a desire to always do what is right.

In the past month, our nation was given a sad reminder that these remarkable individuals will not always be with us to impart their wisdom. The passings of Vietnam War recipients [Roger H.C. Donlon](#) and [Larry L. Taylor](#), leaving just 63 living recipients, many in the twilight of their lives – reinforce the urgency of erecting this monument alongside the American heroes more commonly found in history books. It will commemorate the stories and values of our Medal of Honor recipients, unite Americans around the common ideals embodied by the Medal, and inspire every citizen to look for ways to serve and create a lasting impact in their own communities.

In 2021, the 117th Congress unanimously authorized the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a monument in Washington, D.C. This Congress must complete the work by passing H.R. 2717. The Medal of Honor represents the very best of our Nation – ordinary

citizens who took extraordinary action above and beyond the call of duty and became heroes of our Republic. At a time rife with anger and division, this is a project every American can rally around.

Sincerely,



Representative Blake D. Moore
Member of Congress



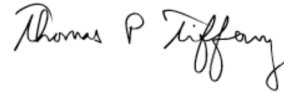
Representative Marc Veasey
Member of Congress



Representative August Pfluger
Member of Congress



Representative Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Representative Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress



Representative Colin Allred
Member of Congress



Representative Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



Representative Jake Ellzey
Member of Congress



Representative Wesley Hunt
Member of Congress



May 15, 2024

Come. Discover. Fly!

Air Camp

Armstrong Air & Space Museum

Aviation Trail, Inc. Visitor Center
& Parachute Museum

Dayton Aviation Heritage
National Historical Park

Hawthorn Hill

Huffman Prairie Flying Field

*Huffman Prairie Flying Field
Interpretive Center*

John W. Berry, Sr.

*Wright Brothers National Museum
at Carillon Historical Park*

Paul Laurence Dunbar State Memorial

Wright Company Factory

*Wright-Dunbar Interpretive Center and
the Wright Cycle Company*

Dayton Convention & Visitors Bureau

Dayton History

Greene County Historical Society

Greene County Convention
& Visitors Bureau

Historic Grimes Field

Champaign Aviation Museum

Grimes Flying Lab Foundation

Historic WACO Field

National Aviation Hall of Fame

National Museum of the
United States Air Force®
& Air Force Museum Foundation

Ohio History Connection

Vectren Dayton Air Show

Woodland Historic Cemetery
& Arboretum

Wright B Flyer, Inc.

The Wright Brothers Family Foundation

Wright Image Group

Wright-Patterson Air Force Base

Wright State University
Special Collections and Archives

The Honorable Angus King
Chairman

Senate Committee on ENR, National Parks
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member

Senate Committee on ENR, National Parks
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator King and Senator Daines:

As I write, visitors outside my office window are taking photos in front of the Wright Brothers Cycle Shop on a sunny afternoon at the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park in Dayton, Ohio. It was here that Orville and Wilbur Wright decided to build their airplane. Each year, visitors from around the world come to see where the Wright Brothers lived and worked. The brothers' invention and following innovations changed the world. On behalf of the National Aviation Heritage Alliance, I offer my letter of support for S.2784 - to amend the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act of 1992 to adjust the boundary of the Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, and for other purposes.

This legislation is a minor boundary adjustment, but passage of S.2784 will have a major impact on Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. The National Park Service supports this legislation and provided verbal testimony of that support at the May 15, 2024, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks hearing. The legislation will expand the Park's boundary by one acre. The addition of land contains a parking area in need of repair. This parking area serves as the primary parking area for staff, volunteers, and visitors to Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. It is the first impression for National Park visitors and needs to safely service the staff and volunteers at both the Park's office headquarters and one of the park's two visitor centers. By including the parking lot inside the boundary, the National Park Service will be authorized to support maintenance activities to provide a safe, accessible, and well-maintained parking facility.

There are several reasons the minor boundary adjustment requires legislative action including the nuances of being a partnership park and limited access to boundary adjustment authorities commonly granted under the Land Water Conservation Fund Act. As a park partner, and a park partner who uses the described parking area, I respectfully ask for your continued support to advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

Mackensie Wittmer
Executive Director
National Aviation Heritage Alliance

Senator DAINES. Now, a couple of questions, Mr. Caldwell.

Montana is home to a number of battlefields administered by the Park Service, including the Big Hole Battlefield in Wisdom, Montana, the Little Bighorn Battlefield near Hardin, and the Bear Paw Battlefield near Chinook. Senate bill 3568 expands coordination of the battlefield programs to include tribes. How do we ensure that tribal voices are heard at the Park Service, especially when it comes to these battlefields that have deep and sometimes painful histories with our tribes?

Mr. CALDWELL. Sure, thank you, Senator.

Grants awarded by the NPS American Battlefield Protection Program are helping to tell those stories of indigenous people's experience, what they experienced, how they experienced American history through these conflicts. Specifically, one of the grants, the Preservation Planning Grant, tribes are eligible for those grants to help plan, do interpretation programs and things like that for tribes. Tribes are eligible for those grants. Eligible projects focus on battlefields or associated sites in the United States. And then lastly, you mentioned, beyond the grant program, several units of the National Park Service, and certainly, I know that we do a lot of collaboration with tribes on the interpretive story of those different units. As a former superintendent of a Revolutionary War battlefield, we certainly worked with the Oneida Indian Nation to tell the story of the Mohawk Valley in New York State. And so I think it's part of the core of our interpretive program. No matter the story, it needs to be told, as both of you indicated earlier, as well as Senator Lankford.

Senator DAINES. Mr. Caldwell, today's hearing also examines the Park Service budget. Our National Parks are one of a few things that bring us all together on this Committee, but I am concerned that we are seeing a shortfall when it comes to prioritizing our National Parks over other more political and divisive issues that the Department of the Interior is currently pushing. How does the Park Service's budget support increasing the number of full-time employees in our parks?

Mr. CALDWELL. The President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposes to fund 19,953 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) across all funding streams. In Fiscal Year 2023, actually FTE usage totaled about 18,900. It is important to note that the Fiscal Year 2023 FTE level is approximately 15 percent below the FTE level in Fiscal Year 2010, despite having many new units added to the system—over 30 units since 2010. Additionally, the Fiscal Year 2024 enacted appropriation did not fund fixed costs, requiring parks to absorb over \$100 million of those costs in their existing budgets. It made additional funding reductions that led to the loss of purchasing power, and therefore FTE in our operations account. This Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposes to restore those reductions.

Senator DAINES. You know, one example, talking about FTEs and employees, is the importance of supporting employee housing. An example, you have Yellowstone National Park, where I grew up nearby. Superintendent Cam Sholly is doing great work to increase housing for employees, but he cannot do that alone. How does the budget help expand housing for Park Service employees in gateway communities? It's not just about attracting the best to serve the

National Park Service, but also to retain them. I think housing is an important part of that.

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, sir. Certainly, you brought up a great example in what Superintendent Sholly is doing at Yellowstone. The Fiscal Year 2025 request proposes more than \$100 million for housing across multiple appropriations—that includes an increase of \$9 million for the Housing Improvement Program, which supports new construction and rehabilitation; more than \$60 million in Great American Outdoors Act deferred maintenance housing projects; \$2 million to support leased housing in local communities where the park will go into a community and lease apartments or whatever it is, for their seasonal employees, in particular; as well as other projects across the funding stream.

Senator DAINES. You mentioned about the maintenance there, and I know the Chairman here and myself believe that fixing the maintenance backlog is a bipartisan issue. We both strongly support it. But I fear that instead of the number being reduced, we are actually seeing it grow. I don't think we can depend on Congress passing another, you know, Great American Outdoors Act every 50 years to deal with the backlog. We have got to get ahead of it here in our budgets. How does the budget support cyclic maintenance so that assets don't continue to pile up from the deferred maintenance list?

Mr. CALDWELL. The Fiscal Year 2025 budget proposes a \$5 million increase for cyclic maintenance projects for a total of \$193.2 million. Whether it is Acadia or Yellowstone, cyclic maintenance is really a central element of the NPS effort to curtail deferred maintenance.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KING. \$5 million is not very much of an increase, and I spoke to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget about this as well as the Department of the Interior. This is something we really have to attend to. We just can't continue to defer maintenance and hope that there will be another Great American Outdoors Act. That's going to be a hard sell for the Vice Chair and I when we tell our colleagues we need more money for deferred maintenance when you are still deferring maintenance. So I hope that in the future budgets we will have a stronger emphasis on ongoing maintenance.

For the record, I would appreciate it if you would give us an analysis of the staffing levels across the National Parks in 2010 and then what we have today, graphed against visitor growth, and number of units growth, because my sense is that we are just not keeping pace, and I understand the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the constraints that we are all operating under, but this is such an important issue that I think it's worthy of some study. So I hope you can do that for us for the record.

The Park Service, I think, received as I recall \$500 million under the IRA for additional staffing. Has that been spent? How is that being allocated, and how long with that last?

Mr. CALDWELL. The National Park Service received \$500 million in IRA funding to hire employees in units of the National Park System and National Historic and Scenic Trails. We have identified approximately 1,500 positions across parks and trails, and we are

in the midst of hiring for those positions right now. The funds are available through Fiscal Year 2030, and the parks have planned their hiring to be available across the full time period, and funds will be exhausted in 2030 of those IRA funds.

Senator KING. Talk to me about fee revenues, particularly with regard to foreign visitors. I could see a differentiation in fees based upon Americans who are paying taxes to support the parks and those who are visiting the parks who are not subject to that additional support for the parks. Is that something that we could explore? Is there additional revenue possible in the fee structure?

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, I think the fee revenue and the Recreational Fee Act is something that I think our staff would welcome an opportunity to discuss with the Committee and your staff.

Senator KING. Thank you.

I see that Senator Hyde-Smith has joined us. I want to welcome her to the hearing. And Senator Hyde-Smith, the floor is yours.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Daines. I have three hearings going on right now, and I am trying to get questions in on all of them at the same time, but thank you for being here today as well, and I see some Mississippians back there. We certainly appreciate your presence.

This bill is extremely important because of the rich history of Natchez, Mississippi, which is one of the premier historical tourism destinations in my state. It is only about 45 minutes from my home and it sure is a shining star for us. Looking first at the Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, a national landmark, this location interprets the story of the Natchez people, who originally lived there, and the Grand Village was the last ceremonial mound center of the Natchez people and their homeland. It was also the site of the 1730 battle between the Natchez and the French that ultimately led to the expulsion of the Natchez people from Mississippi.

Historical Jefferson College is another location in Natchez that is steeped deep in history. It was Mississippi's birthplace—the intellectual center of the old Natchez District, and served as a Freedmen's Bureau site after the Civil War. Jefferson College is nationally significant also as the most intact and most complete surviving college complex from the early American period of 1785 to 1840, notable for the architectural integrity of this building and for the overall integrity of the early college landscape.

I introduced this bill to support these two historic sites by amplifying their stories, not only to Mississippians, but to all Americans and visitors from around the world who are drawn to Natchez. I understand and respect that the National Park Service has a process for determining affiliated area status for historical locations and that that process is currently underway. I don't want to impede or hinder that process in any way. I want to show my support for this endeavor and stand ready to help however I can.

Before I get to my questions, I want to mention letters of support for this endeavor from the Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves, Natchez Mayor Dan Gibson, who is doing an awesome job, and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, which is the state agency tasked with preserving and protecting the historical resources of Mississippi.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to enter these into the record as well.

[Letters of support follow:]



State of Mississippi

TATE REEVES
Governor

May 6, 2024

Honorable Angus S. King
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman King and Ranking Member Daines:

Natchez is one of the premiere historical tourism destinations in our state. This industry, the fourth largest employer in Mississippi, is a vital part of our economy and I am proud to support efforts that strengthen that sector.

The “Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College Affiliated Areas Establishment Act,” introduced by Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith, is one such initiative that will help to further enhance Natchez as a destination for visitors who are seeking to learn more about American and Southern history. Under the leadership of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), there are more opportunities than ever to tell stories of the compelling history of Natchez and how it impacted the nation we live in today.

Establishing an Affiliated Area to the federal Natchez National Historical Park with these two historic properties owned and operated by MDAH will allow the National Park Service to more closely coordinate with the state on interpretation, technical assistance, and collaboration.

Mississippi’s story is central to American history and this Affiliated Area in Natchez will highlight those stories and bring them to life for generations to come. It will also help support the thousands of jobs in southwest Mississippi that rely on tourism to drive the local economy. For these reasons I offer my support for “Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College Affiliated Areas Establishment Act” and hope to see it become law.

Sincerely,

Tate Reeves

CC: Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Honorable Roger Wicker



Dan M. Gibson, Mayor
124 South Pearl Street
Natchez MS 39120
P: 601.445-7555
E: mayor@natchez.ms.us



Honorable Angus S. King
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman King and Ranking Member Daines:

Natchez is home to some of the most impactful sites in America's long and complicated history. From westward expansion to Indian removal, the magnificent wealth of the Cotton Kingdom and the scourge of slavery that built that empire, you cannot fully appreciate our nation's history without visiting Natchez. This is evident in the creation of the National Park Service's Natchez National Historical Park which manages multiple historical sites. We are blessed to host that Park and enjoy the benefits of bringing visitors from around the world to our small town.

There are other state-owned facilities in and around Natchez that help to tell the story of those federal sites. This is why Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith introduced the "Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College Affiliated Areas Establishment Act." The City of Natchez fully supports this legislation and believes it will be a great benefit to the National Park Service.

We enjoy a wonderful partnership with our Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) which owns the sites impacted by this legislation. MDAH understands the value of historical tourism and the lifeline it is to small towns like Natchez. Thousands of our citizens rely on the tourism economy for employment and our small businesses are heavily impacted by that industry as well.

These are exciting times in Natchez. There are multiple new hotel developments and new downtown businesses coming online. The relatively new Mississippi River cruise industry is booming and brings thousands of visitors a month to Natchez to experience our historical sites.

We believe a more formal partnership between the Natchez National Historical Park and these state sites, as envisioned in this legislation, will only encourage more tourism, more scholarly work on Natchez's history, and more economic opportunities for this part of Mississippi. We

appreciate our Congressional delegation for their leadership on this legislation, and we hope that you will give it every consideration.

Thank you for your support of the "Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College Affiliated Areas Establishment Act" and we hope to welcome you to Natchez someday soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dan Gibson", is written over the printed name.

Mayor Dan Gibson

CC: Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Honorable Roger Wicker



P.O. Box 571
Jackson, MS 39205-0571
601-576-6850
mdah.ms.gov

Honorable Angus S. King
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman King and Ranking Member Daines:

Thank you for your consideration of S. 3241, the “Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College Affiliated Areas Establishment Act,” introduced by Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith. Establishing an Affiliated Area to the federal Natchez National Historical Park with these two historic properties owned and operated by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (“MDAH”) will allow the National Park Service to more closely coordinate with MDAH on interpretation, technical assistance, and collaboration. To be clear, this effort does not contemplate the federal government assuming control of or responsibility for these two properties.

MDAH is the state agency tasked with preserving and protecting the historical resources of Mississippi. We are committed to telling all the stories of Mississippi and putting the individual voices of that complex and challenging history at the center of our efforts.

We believe that Historic Jefferson College and Grand Village of the Natchez Indians can support the existing work of the National Park Service in Natchez by highlighting the history of Native Americans, westward expansion of the early country, the founding of Mississippi, the Cotton Kingdom built on slavery, Civil War, Reconstruction, and Civil Rights in southwest Mississippi. All of these stories are central to American history and should be experienced by visitors and scholars here in Mississippi where so much of this part of our nation’s history occurred.

Justification

The purpose of S. 3241 is to establish a link between two state-owned historical sites and the multiple federally owned and operated sites that make up the Natchez National Historical Park.

According to a Congressional Research Service 2019 report on Affiliated Areas, there are approximately 25 of these locations around the country. They are established by law and must meet the following criteria:

- Meet the same standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the National Park System;
- Require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs;

Board of Trustees: Spence Flatgard, *president* | Nancy Carpenter, *vice president* | Reginald Buckley | Carter Burns | Betsey Hamilton | Mark E. Keenum | Lucius M. Lampton | TJ Taylor

- Be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the National Park System; and
- Be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the NPS and the nonfederal management entity.

Affiliated status is appropriate for both sites because of their contributions to the purposes Congress expressed in the enabling legislation of the Natchez National Historical Park

The Grand Village of the Natchez Indians, a National Landmark, interprets the story of the Natchez people, who were the original occupants of the area. Grand Village was the last ceremonial mound center of the Natchez people in their ancestral homeland. During a period of intense conflict between the Natchez and the French, Grand Village was the site of a battle in 1730 that led ultimately to the expulsion of the Natchez from Mississippi. Grand Village is a sacred site to Native Americans and a National Historic Landmark.

The story of the Natchez Native Americans is essential to fulfilling purposes identified in §410oo. of Public Law 100-479 (1988), which established Natchez National Historical Park: “to preserve and interpret the sites and structures associated with all peoples of Natchez and its surrounding area from earliest inhabitants to the modern era, and including blacks, both slave and free.” The current offerings at the Natchez National Historical Park do not have a site specifically focused on the Native Americans living in Natchez.

Historic Jefferson College was Mississippi’s birthplace, the intellectual center of the Old Natchez District, and served as a Freedmen’s Bureau site after the Civil War. The Freedmen’s Bureau school and orphan asylum were located in the East and West Wings, and the President’s House and old Methodist church on campus housed the Freedmen’s Hospital. Jefferson College is nationally significant also as the most intact and most complete surviving college complex from the early American period (c.1785-c.1840), notable for the architectural integrity of its buildings and for the overall integrity of the early college landscape.

Historic Jefferson College is important to the park’s mission to “preserve and interpret the region’s commercial and agricultural history, especially in relation to the Mississippi River and cotton,” and to “preserve and interpret the region’s social, political, and economic development with particular emphasis on the pre and post-Civil War eras.” (§410oo. of Public Law 100-479)

These sites are closely related to the federal sites of the Natchez National Historical Park. Grand Village can provide additional context from a Native American standpoint for the history of early French settlers told at NPS’s Fort Rosalie just down the road. Historic Jefferson College expands upon the stories being told at Forks of the Road, for instance, as it served as a Freedman’s Bureau. These are among several examples of how our state sites can tie together and enhance various stories told in the federal historical sites around Natchez.



P.O. Box 571
Jackson, MS 39205-0571
601-576-6850
mdah.ms.gov

An Affiliated Area designation is important so that the NPS and MDAH can coordinate on interpretations and share information that can better inform interpretation and programming. It is

also important to cross-market the sites to national and international visitors who are traveling to Mississippi to better understand this complex and important history in the place where it happened. Both agencies' missions can be enhanced by a formal partnership made possible by the Affiliated Area designation.

Closing

MDAH is committed to managing these sites in a manner that meets the criteria required for the Affiliated Area designation. MDAH is the state's historic preservation office and therefore maintains its properties to highest standards. We regularly work closely with our partners at the National Park Service, and this effort has provided opportunities for even closer collaboration and coordination.

This legislation has the support of local elected officials, the Historic Natchez Foundation, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation which protects the legacy of the Natchez people, and state leaders, as evidenced by the attached letters of support.

We believe that Grand Village of the Natchez Indians and Jefferson College are ideal candidates for a new Affiliated Area designation, and we respectfully request your support of S. 3241.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Blount". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katie Blount
Executive Director

CC: Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Honorable Roger Wicker

Senator HYDE-SMITH. But the question—Mr. Caldwell, I first want to thank you and your team at NPS for responding to my request for surveys of these two sites in Natchez and for working diligently to come to a determination—hopefully by the summer of this year. Can you please provide specifics of what sort of analysis is needed at this point in the study to reach a final determination?

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, thank you for the question.

We are, in both sites that you mentioned, we are fully underway with our reconnaissance survey and have gotten to a point where we are now reviewing them internally within the National Park System within the Department of the Interior. And I think we would look forward to a chance to brief you and your staff on the status of where that is over the course of the summer. We look forward to completing that study and getting it back to you in an efficient time.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you very much.

And will you commit to me that the NPS will work with me and my staff on these locations, because they have deep but undeveloped ties to existing NPS sites already within Natchez, and I certainly appreciate your willingness to provide recommended language and additional information—anything that we need to add to that, and just the commitment there?

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes, we are happy to work with you and your staff on that.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you so very much, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KING. Thank you.

I understand Senator Padilla is on his way back. A couple of additional questions. Assuming no increase in responsibilities, which is not accurate, but assuming that, how much additional funding would the Park Service need to maintain the same staffing and service levels as in 2023? If you need to take that for the record, that would be fine, but if you have an answer—

Mr. CALDWELL. There are always new responsibilities, as you can imagine, and earlier we discussed the overall budget request for Fiscal Year 2025, and I think we will, in terms of the specific numbers to hold a steady state and things like that, that's something I would like to work on with our budget team to follow up with you on specifically.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Talk to me about housing. Well, let me back up.

Mr. CALDWELL. Sure.

Senator KING. How are you doing on recruiting? Every business I talk to in the country is having workforce problems.

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes.

Senator KING. Are you having similar problems or have you been able to attract the people that you need?

Mr. CALDWELL. I think similar to the businesses across the country, like you said, recruiting is always a challenge for us, particularly in areas where we may not have the housing to offer to bring folks out to different communities. We have a recruitment office in the National Park Service now, so we are more strategic as an agency to recruiting different candidates to come into the National Park Service, but housing is certainly one key element of that recruiting that has to be done. And so, in places like Acadia, we have

just an incredible friends group who is partnering with the National Park Service to ensure that we can increase our capacity for dorm rooms—they actually purchased a bed and breakfast and can provide housing. We have a number of those examples across the park system in other parts of the country where partners are stepping up to work in collaboration with the National Park Service to help bring in more capacity so that can be an important component of recruiting.

Senator KING. So the Park Service is recognizing housing is now a part of recruitment?

Mr. CALDWELL. Every superintendent I talk to about housing reminds me that housing is an important part of their recruitment.

Senator KING. Now, how are we doing on visitation? Can you—we don't have a graph, but is it an upward trend, and how did we make it through the—how was visitation during the pandemic?

Mr. CALDWELL. Well, certainly we have a number of places across the country that have seen a dramatic increase in visitation, not everywhere, but certainly places like Yellowstone, where the infrastructure largely—at that park, where visitation has skyrocketed—was built in the 80s or even earlier. That is why it has been so vital to have the Great American Outdoors Act making these generational investments, not just the Band-Aid approach, but a generational investment where our children's children will have the same access to these sites, these parks, these places that we enjoy with our families. So visitation, certainly across many parts of the system, continues on an upward trajectory.

Senator KING. Thank you.

Senator Padilla, welcome back.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I wanted to acknowledge that Senator Daines brought up one of the issue areas that I was going to chime in on relative to housing, and even as it relates to staffing issues at several of our parks and its impact on maintenance and the user experience, if you will. So I want to associate myself with that line of questions and hope to be part of the discussions to invest and make additional improvements there as well.

But given the extra time then, I can turn to other issues. One that is garnering a lot of excitement in Northern California, the O Rew project at Redwoods National and State Parks, is a potential landmark arrangement between the Yurok Tribe, the National Park Service, California State Parks, and Save the Redwoods League. So I very much support the Park Service moving forward and formalizing a co-management paradigm that captures the values of the tribe and Redwoods National and State Parks.

A question for Mr. Caldwell—does the Park Service need funding or any statutory changes to bring this arrangement and other tribal co-stewardship agreements to fruition?

Mr. CALDWELL. We can certainly get back to you specifically on the funding question with that, but the co-stewardship priority has been made very clear by both the Secretary and Director. We appreciate your support on that and we look forward to seeing that continue.

Senator PADILLA. And I have to imagine it's a model that we are considering—

Mr. CALDWELL. Sure.

Senator PADILLA [continuing]. And implementing in areas well beyond California, but I am proud to tout California as a leader in this particular space.

Now, Mr. Caldwell, one of my priority programs in the National Park Service budget is the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership. Our offices have been in touch on that, which funds park projects in urban and low-income communities. This program is critical for closing what many refer to as the “nature gap,” right? The discrepancy in access to outdoor spaces and experiences for different communities. That is why I have introduced the bipartisan Outdoors for All Act, a bill to codify and improve this program. Can you reiterate why driving funds to this program is so important and how the program benefits communities around the country that don’t have comparable access to parks?

Mr. CALDWELL. Sure. Well, I think it is a very important program of the National Park Service. Those types of external programs that put resources into communities that may not be close to a national park or may need areas, parks, or different facilities to enjoy recreation. So that will continue, certainly, to remain a priority in Fiscal Year 2025.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you for that. And I know just providing that access, whether it’s proximity to a park, is just half the battle. In many of the more popular parks and facilities, oftentimes it’s not just, well, it’s not that far, I know how to get there, but have to make a reservation.

Mr. CALDWELL. Yes.

Senator PADILLA. And so we deal with the reservation systems, and I want to ask a question about reservation systems through the lens of equity. Initial data looking at reservations in the National Park System suggested this nature gap is also visible in reservation systems. Users of the reservation systems tend to be wealthier, more highly educated, and the communities of color are not as significant users as other counterparts. What best practices is the National Park Service considering in designing equitable reservation systems, and what resources do you need from Congress to make these improvements?

Mr. CALDWELL. Sure. Yes, I think we could get back to you and your staff and the Committee staff on what our business services operation, who runs our reservation system, what they are looking at to ensure equitable access to those reservation systems.

Senator PADILLA. Okay, I just want to make sure that as we are trying to improve the experience that we are not losing sight of equity. Again, equity in physical access, but the reservation system being so key, particularly to the more popular parks, that it is functioning the way that we envision and consistent with our nation’s “small d” democratic values.

Thank you for your service. Thank you for being here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator KING. The distinguished Senator from Georgia.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Daines, pleasure to join you, and thank you for accommodating me. I am grateful to you for including in this morning’s hearing, S. 4216, my legislation to establish the Ocmulgee Mounds National

Park and Preserve. As this is an initiative with overwhelming bipartisan support in the State of Georgia, extraordinary local support, and I think, Mr. Chairman, you were kind enough to recognize earlier today, Seth Clark, the Macon-Bibb County Mayor Pro Tempore and Executive Director of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative, as well as Tracie Revis, who is a citizen and former Chief of Staff of the Muscogee Creek Nation and Director of Advocacy for this park initiative. This is some of the most extraordinary territory in the United States, continuously inhabited for more than 12,000 years by members of the Muscogee Creek Nation, exquisite and invaluable cultural artifacts, gorgeous woodlands along the banks of the Ocmulgee River. I am grateful to the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior for working so closely with my team to develop this legislation. We look forward to working with both of you on a bipartisan basis to incorporate any technical advice that is necessary to advance this legislation to the Senate floor.

I just want to emphasize that not only will this be transformative for middle Georgia and its economic development and its tourist economy, to establish Georgia's first-ever National Park, but it also will be a powerful statement about the relationship between our state and the Muscogee Creek Nation and its history and an opportunity for Georgians to enjoy outdoor education and outdoor recreation in gorgeous woodland, river banks, and cultural sites. So thank you, Chairman King and Senator Daines, for your consideration of this legislation. I am ready to work with you to make sure that it gets over the line.

Senator KING. Thank you, Senator.

Again, I want to thank you, Mr. Caldwell, for your testimony and for the work that the Park Service does. As I mentioned at the beginning, I learn a lot at these hearings. Today, I learned there is a community in Montana called Wisdom, so I am going to refer to my colleague here as the Senator from Wisdom from now on.

I want to thank you again, and we will hold the record open for additional comments and suggestions over the next few days and look forward to working with you, Mr. Caldwell, and the National Park Service on these meritorious bills.

Thank you very much. The hearing is closed.

[Whereupon, at 11:14 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

OCT 21 2024

The Honorable Angus King
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed are responses prepared by the National Park Service to the questions for the record submitted following the Subcommittee's May 15, 2024, hearing on both pending legislation and the President's budget request for the National Park Service for Fiscal Year 2025.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to you on these matters.

Sincerely,

Pamela L. Barkin
Acting Legislative Counsel
Office of Congressional and
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member

Questions for the Record**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources****Subcommittee on National Parks****Hearing: *The President's Budget Request for The National Park******Service for Fiscal Year 2025 and Pending Legislation*****May 15, 2024****Questions from Senator Alex Padilla****Question 1: What additional resources or policy does the National Park Service need to improve affordable housing opportunities for employees?**

Response: The National Park Service (NPS) is committed to addressing its employee housing needs. The FY25 President's Budget Request includes an increase of \$9 million above FY 2024 enacted levels, for a total of \$16.9 million for the Housing Improvement Program. In FY 2023 – FY 2024, and continuing into FY 2025, the NPS formulated more than \$100 million each year to address housing across multiple funding streams, including quarters, cyclic, repair/rehab, Centennial Challenge, various Construction accounts, including disaster supplementals, and the Legacy Restoration Fund (LRF).

The National Park Service Housing Improvement legislation enacted in 1996 (54 USC 101331 et seq.) was intended to leverage the private sector in providing an adequate supply of housing for NPS employees and reduce the need for appropriations. The law authorizes the NPS to enter into agreements with entities to develop, construct, rehabilitate, or manage housing located on or off public lands for rent or lease to NPS employees. The NPS continues to analyze how to use this existing authority more effectively.

The NPS recognizes that, ultimately, improving affordable housing opportunities for employees requires a multifaceted approach that may involve exploring additional authorities for greater flexibility in partnerships, hiring, pay, and benefits, in addition to investing additional funding. We welcome the opportunity to work with Congress and explore these avenues further.

Question 2: What incentives, special rates, and other flexibilities is NPS using to reduce vacancies and address pay parity issues with state and local park agencies? Are there any bottlenecks with OPM and OMB to approve using these incentives, special rates, and other flexibilities?

Response: The NPS actively supports the use of all available incentive and compensation flexibilities to attract and retain qualified, diverse employees. These incentive and compensation flexibilities include recruitment, relocation, and retention incentives as well as the student loan repayment program, superior qualifications, special needs pay-setting, and the maximum payable rate rule. At this time, the NPS has not observed any bottlenecks with OPM and OMB in exercising the use of these flexibilities.

Question 3: What best practices is NPS considering to design equitable reservation systems, and what resources or directives does NPS need from Congress to ensure that reservation systems are equitable?

Questions for the Record**U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources****Subcommittee on National Parks****Hearing: *The President's Budget Request for The National Park******Service for Fiscal Year 2025 and Pending Legislation*****May 15, 2024**

Response: The National Park Service manages a number of different reservation systems for a wide variety of recreational activities, from white water rafting to overnight lodging. In managing these complex data systems, the NPS constantly looks for new ways to create a more transparent and equitable user experience. In addition, the NPS tries to keep pace with changes in technology that frequently reshape the public's expectations and perceptions.

Generally, concessioner-managed systems operate on a first-come, first-served basis consistent with industry standards, while reservations systems managed directly by the federal government, such as recreation.gov, operate on a mixed system whereby some recreational activities are offered on a first-come, first-served basis while others are managed on a lottery or phased allocation basis.

Rec.gov is an online visitor reservation system, and mobile app, with a dedicated call and chat support center. In 2023, Recreation.gov added a feature for visitors to engage with website content in Spanish, expanding the service to a wider audience and improving access and equity for more users. Additionally, Recreation.gov improved overall page speeds supporting visitors in remote locations where bandwidth is limited, and connectivity may be spotty. User feedback is being captured through feedback forms found on the website and will be used to continuously improve the service.

Recreation.gov is managed by Recreation One Stop (R1S), an interagency partnership formed to provide reservation services, sharable data, and recreation trip-planning tools for federal lands and waters across the United States. R1S was created as a Quicksilver e-government initiative in 2002 with the primary goal of reducing redundancy by combining the online reservation services of the USFS, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the NPS. Originally focused primarily on providing advanced reservations for developed campgrounds and tickets, Recreation.gov is now used by millions of visitors to plan, reserve, and share their federal land recreational experiences in national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges, and national waterways. The USFS within the U.S. Department of Agriculture manages the R1S reservation services contract on behalf of all the participating federal agencies.

At this time, the NPS does not require any resources or directives from Congress to help ensure reservation systems are equitable.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS

“Hearing on the President’s Budget Request for the National Park Service for Fiscal Year 2025 and to Receive Testimony on Pending Legislation”

Wednesday, May 15, 2024

SENATOR JOHN HOEVEN STATEMENT FOR RECORD:

Thank you, Chair King and Ranking Member Daines, for holding this hearing, and to the witnesses for being with us today. I am pleased that the Subcommittee will be reviewing a number of important bills, including **S. 4129, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Act**.

Senators Blumenthal, Cramer, and Heinrich joined me in cosponsoring this bipartisan legislation, which authorizes funding for the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library in Medora, North Dakota. Representatives Kelly Armstrong and Joe Neguse are leading a bipartisan companion bill in the House.

As President Roosevelt proudly claimed, he would not have ascended to the presidency had it not been for his formative years in North Dakota. Fittingly, the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library will be located adjacent to the Theodore Roosevelt National Park. President Roosevelt first traveled to the Dakota Territory in 1883 to hunt bison and returned in 1884 while mourning the passing of both his wife and his mother. President Roosevelt called the Dakota Territory home for three years while enjoying the vast beauty that the badlands have to offer.

Under our legislation, funding would be contingent on the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library Foundation raising twice the matching funds from non-federal sources. Additionally, the bill authorizes the Foundation to enter into interagency agreements aimed at exhibiting collections associated with Theodore Roosevelt, including many materials currently held by the National Park Service. This legislation is consistent with the support Congress provided in 2000 for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, under a similar bill that was favorably considered by the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this important initiative honoring our nation’s 26th president and ensuring that future generations of Americans can access the rich history and enduring impact of President Theodore Roosevelt.



G.T. Bynum
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

February 1, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

I would like to thank you for visiting Tulsa and acknowledging Black Wall Street, the Historic Greenwood District, and the 100th commemoration of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Your visit brought national attention to an important part of American history that has been historically underreported, but more can be done. As the National Park Service found in 2005, we know this area is worthy of National Monument status.

I urge you to exercise your authority under the Antiquities Act to designate a national monument to honor the accomplishments of Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District, and to also commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. This monument would highlight a historically forgotten about event in American history and serve as a warning that this moment in history must never be repeated.

Despite the events that unfolded in 1921, the legacy of Black Wall Street and Greenwood lives on and stands as a testament to the resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of our community. Designating this monument would not only acknowledge the tremendous contributions of those in this community, but it would also serve as a powerful symbol of perseverance in the face of adversity.

As Mayor of the City of Tulsa, I strongly urge the Biden Administration to designate a new national monument to commemorate Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

G.T. Bynum
Mayor
City of Tulsa


Board of County Commissioners

Tulsa County HQ
218 W. 6th St.
Tulsa, OK 74119-1004
918.596.5000

STAN SALLEE
DISTRICT #1
918-596-5020

KAREN KEITH
DISTRICT #2
918-596-5015

KELLY DUNKERLEY
DISTRICT #3
918-596-5010

APPROVED
2/27/2023

February 27, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

The Board of County Commissioners of the County of Tulsa respectfully requests you exercise your authority under the Antiquities Act to honor the accomplishments of Black Wall Street, the Historic Greenwood District and to commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre with a national monument. Although a specific property for the monument has not yet been identified, the crucial story of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and its effect on the African American community, the State of Oklahoma, and our nation's history demands the honor of monument status. Likewise, the financial and cultural significance of Black Wall Street and the Greenwood District qualify for a well-deserved, but overdue monument.

We join other Tulsa civic leaders in endorsing this proposal, including the City of Tulsa, which recently sponsored a resolution to establish a national monument in the area. Although the City of Tulsa has not identified a property to be considered as a monument, we are confident that a suitable location will be identified.

This Board encourages you to provide your fullest consideration to designate a new national monument commemorating Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District. We look forward to this opportunity to broaden our nation's understanding of the historic area and the tragic events that shaped our history. We appreciate your consideration and stand ready to assist in any way possible.

Very Respectfully,

Kelly Dunkerley
County Commissioner
District 3

Stan Sallee
County Commissioner
District 1

Karen Keith
County Commissioner
District 2

CME# 20230272

(Published in the Tulsa World
5th day of March 2023.)

RESOLUTION NO. 20236

The City Clerk of the City of Tulsa, OK,
 a Municipal Corporation, hereby certifies
 that the foregoing is a true and correct
 copy of attachment herewith set out as
 appears of record in the City Clerk's Office,
 175 E 2nd Street, Suite 260, Tulsa, OK,
 this 2nd day of March 2023
 by Kathy Koppell
 City Clerk



A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO COMMEMORATE THE HISTORIC GREENWOOD DISTRICT AND BLACK WALL STREET A NATIONAL MONUMENT, PURSUANT TO THE ANTIQUITIES ACT OF 1906, 54 U.S.C. §§320301-320303.

WHEREAS, the Historic Greenwood District, known as Black Wall Street, was home to a thriving Black commercial district, whose Black-owned buildings housed thriving businesses, grocery stores, libraries, and more; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Greenwood District was one of the most affluent African-American communities in the country, leading to the nickname Black Wall Street; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street community grew and flourished, and became a successful model for African Americans in segregated cities during Jim Crow; and

WHEREAS, starting in the evening of May 31, 1921, and carrying over into the morning of June 1, 1921, the prosperous community of the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street was consumed by fires and violence when a group of White rioters invaded the neighborhood; and more than 70 percent of Black Wall Street, approximately 35 to 40 blocks, were burned to the ground as part of the what is called the Tulsa Race Massacre; and

WHEREAS, historians believe that approximately 300 Black residents of the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street were murdered, and approximately 9,000 individuals were homeless as a result of the Tulsa Race Massacre; and

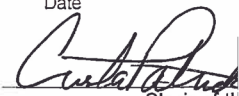
WHEREAS, in 2005, the National Park Service's '1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey' found the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street, and the Tulsa Race Massacre, to be "nationally significant" and "an outstanding example of a particular type of resource" and "possesses exceptional value or quality in ... interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our national heritage."; and

WHEREAS, less than a quarter of our country's national parks are devoted to recognizing the history of diverse peoples, movements, and cultures, designating the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street a National Monument will help guarantee that our public lands better reflect the diversity and history of the country; and

WHEREAS, it is in the public interest to preserve and protect historic objects associated with the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street and Tulsa Race Massacre;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF TULSA THAT:

Section 1. The Tulsa City Council calls on the President of the United States of America to use the authority granted under the Antiquities Act of 1906, 54 U.S.C. §§320301-320303, to designate a new National Monument to commemorate the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street.

ADOPTED by the Council FEB 22 2023
Date

Chair of the Council

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Received by the Mayor: _____, at _____
Date Time

By: _____
Secretary

APPROVED by the Mayor of the City of Tulsa, Oklahoma: MAR 01 2023
Date
 at _____
Time

 (Seal)

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY:


City Attorney



ᏍᏍᏍ ᏍᏍᏍ
CHEROKEE NATION®

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 918-453-5000 • www.cherokee.org

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief
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 ᏍᏍᏍᏍᏍᏍ

Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief
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May 9, 2023

Osiyo,

As Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the largest federally recognized tribe in the United States, I am writing to support the designation of the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street as a National Monument.

Most of the Historic Greenwood District sits on the Cherokee Nation Reservation in northeast Oklahoman. The area was home to a thriving Black commercial district, where Black-owned buildings housed thriving businesses, grocery stores, banks, libraries, and more. It became one of the most affluent African-American communities in the country, leading to the nickname Black Wall Street.

In 1921, this prosperous community was consumed by fires and violence when a group of white rioters invaded the neighborhood. An estimated 300 Black residents were murdered and approximately 9,000 individuals were made homeless during what is called the Tulsa Race Massacre.

Today, the area is a testament to a Black Tulsa community that suffered terrible persecution, but also built and rebuilt essential livelihoods and cultural institutions in the face of that persecution. In 2005, the “1921 Tulsa Race Riot Reconnaissance Survey” by the National Park Service found the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street to be “nationally significant” and “an outstanding example of a particular type of resource” that possesses “exceptional value or quality” for understanding our national heritage.

Currently less than a quarter of our country’s national parks are devoted to recognizing the history of diverse peoples, movements, and cultures, even though it is strongly in the public interest to preserve and protect these historic places. Designating the Historic Greenwood District and Black Wall Street as a National Monument will help guarantee that our public lands better reflect the diversity and history of the country.

Wado,

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
 Cherokee Nation Principal Chief



SENATOR KEVIN L. MATTHEWS
Senate District 11

May 14, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of the undersigned descendants, elected officials, community members, and organizations in Oklahoma and across the United States, we would like to thank you for visiting Tulsa and acknowledging Black Wall Street, the Historic Greenwood District, and the 100th Commemoration of the Greenwood Massacre. Your visit brought national attention to an under-told story in American history.

The National Park Service determined in 2005 that Tulsa is an area worthy of national monument status. It is important to our community that we receive your support in designating a national monument to honor the accomplishments of Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District, and to commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Designating this site will help guarantee that our monuments better reflect the diversity of our Country. Furthermore, a Black Wall Street Historic Greenwood District monument would highlight often-forgotten events in American history.

Designating Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District as a National Monument would be a step forward in preserving the legacy of our history, as we continue to recognize the horrible past and help educate future generations.

Thank you again for your visit and the consideration of the Biden Administration to designate a new national monument to commemorate Tulsa's Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin L. Matthews".

Kevin L. Matthews
District 11

2300 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105
p: (405) 521-5598 | e: kevin.matthews@oksenate.gov



Office of State Representative Monroe Nichols
Oklahoma House District 72

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Nichols Calls on Pres. Biden to Designate Greenwood a National Monument

TULSA, Okla. – Rep. Monroe Nichols, D-Tulsa, released the following statement in concert with many Tulsa organizations calling on President Biden to designate Greenwood as a National Monument.

“Greenwood’s legacy isn’t defined by the 1921 Massacre, but by the resiliency of Greenwood residents who built and rebuilt the community, which continues to thrive today.

“Many Black children grow up learning about the horrors of slavery and the inequities leading to the civil rights movement, but few ever hear the story of Greenwood – the story of Black wealth.

“Greenwood holds significant historical and cultural value as a symbol of Black excellence, entrepreneurship, and resilience in the face of systemic racism and violence. Designating Greenwood as a national monument would preserve its place in American history, honor the Greenwood community and educate the public about its importance. So Today, I join members of my community in calling for President Biden to designate this historic site as a National Monument.”

-END-

Media Contact:

Wes Carter

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TULSA CITY COUNCIL

March 6, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

First, I would like to express my appreciation to you for your visit to Tulsa during the 100-year commemoration of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Your visit to Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District as well as your acknowledgement of the events of the Massacre helped shine the national spotlight on an important, yet historically overlooked, part of American history.

I urge you to exercise your authority under the Antiquities Act to designate a national monument to honor the importance and continuing accomplishments of Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District, as well as to commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

I agree with the 2005 findings of the National Park Service that Black Wall Street, the Historic Greenwood District, and the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre are of national significance and worthy of National Monument status.

The designation of this monument would cement the history and legacy of Black Wall Street, the Historic Greenwood District, and what happened to them during the Massacre. Since 1921, this area has rebuilt and grown to once again be a vibrant, thriving part of Tulsa. The monument would celebrate that resilience and also serve as an important warning that the events that took place over a century ago must never happen again.

As City Councilor for District 1, where Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District are located, I strongly urge the Biden Administration to designate a new national monument to commemorate this momentous place. Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Vanessa Hall-Harper'.

Vanessa Hall-Harper,
Tulsa City Councilor, District 1

175 EAST SECOND STREET, FOURTH FLOOR • TULSA, OKLAHOMA 74103
(918) 596-1990 • FAX 596-1964 • www.tulsacouncil.or



**National Main Street
Center**
a subsidiary of the
National Trust for Historic Preservation



March 2, 2022

Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Biden:

The National Main Street Center, Inc (NMSC), joins in with the coalition of elected officials and organizations, in Oklahoma and across the United States, in supporting the designation of Tulsa, Oklahoma's Black Wall Street as a National Monument. The Administration's visit to Tulsa last year and acknowledging the 100th anniversary of the Greenwood massacre brought national attention to an under-told story in American history. NMSC strongly believe that this area is worthy of National Monument status.

We are writing to urge you to use the Antiquities Act to designate a new national monument to commemorate the Tulsa Race Riot Massacre and Black Wall Street. With less than a quarter of our country's national parks devoted to recognizing the histories of diverse peoples, movements, and cultures, designating this site will help guarantee that our public lands reflect the diversity of the country. Like Pullman, Stonewall, Honouliuli, and other recent national monuments, a Tulsa Race Riot Massacre monument would highlight an often-forgotten event in American history. By not acknowledging and memorializing this complex story, we are ignoring the history of Black success in the US, along with the unjust and violent attempt to suppress it. We ignore how this massacre represents just one of many injustices against Black folks in this country and the ways that racism and discrimination persist in our history, culture, and politics today.

By contrast, designating Black Wall Street as a National Monument would not only be a step forward in preserving the legacy of this place but also serve as a warning that this moment in history must never be repeated. Right now, we have an opportunity to recognize and educate ourselves about our ugly past, but also reimagine what this place can look like for future generations.

National Main Street Center enthusiastically joins in with officials and coalition of groups strongly urging the Biden Administration to designate a new national monument to commemorate Tulsa's Race Riot Massacre. Thank you for your consideration.
Sincerely,

Dionne Baux

Vice President of Urban Development
National Main Street Center, Inc.



TULSA
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

700 N. Greenwood Avenue
Tulsa, OK 74106-0702
Office: 918-594-8001
Fax: 918-594-8023

February 16, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I very much appreciated your visit to Tulsa in 2021 when you toured Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District, and also paid respects to the devastating 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre during its centennial year. The time you spent in our city garnered national media attention and greatly aided our efforts to tell a story that went untold for far too many years.

Not only do Tulsans believe this story is worthy of recognition – others across the nation do as well. In 2005, the National Park Service noted this area is worthy of being named a National Monument, and we wholeheartedly agree. Your authority under the Antiquities Act can designate this historically significant area as such so that countless generations of Americans can honor the legacy and resilience of a community rebuilt in the face of unspeakable tragedy.

Just 16 years before the events of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre devastated this historic Black community, Spanish philosopher George Santayana penned the words, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” No truer words could describe what we hope to achieve with national monument status to honor Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District: To never forget the darkest time in our city’s history, to celebrate the spirit that lived there before – and the one that is rising again even today.

As Interim President of Oklahoma State University-Tulsa, OSU’s urban-serving branch campus in the heart of the Greenwood District, I humbly ask your administration to commemorate Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District with national monument status. Thank you for your consideration.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Johnny Stephens".

Dr. Johnny Stephens
President, OSU Center for Health Sciences
Interim President, OSU-Tulsa



Langston • Tulsa • Oklahoma City
Office of the President

February 17, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am writing on behalf of Langston University, the only Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the state of Oklahoma, to support the initiative to signify the Black Wall Street and Historic Greenwood District located in Tulsa, Oklahoma as being worthy of National Monument Status.

This status would honor the accomplishments of the Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District and commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. It would recognize the history of diversity by bringing cultures from various background to learn of an often-forgotten event in American history.

Designating Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District a National Monument would take a step forward in preserving the legacy of this area and in hopes for this moment in history to never be repeated.

We thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Kent J. Smith, Jr., Ph.D.
President

FIND THE LION IN YOU

P.O. Box 907 • Langston, Oklahoma 73050 • T: 405.466.3201 • F: 405.466.3461 • www.langston.edu

February 13, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of the undersigned descendants, elected officials, community members, and organizations in Oklahoma and across the United States, we would like to thank you for visiting Tulsa and acknowledging Black Wall Street, the Historic Greenwood District, and the 100th commemoration of the Greenwood massacre. Your visit brought national attention to an under-told story in American history, but more can be done. As the National Park Service found in 2005, we know this area is worthy of National Monument status.

We urge you to exercise your authority under the Antiquities Act to designate a national monument to honor the accomplishments of Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District, and to also commemorate the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. With less than a quarter of our country's national parks devoted to recognizing the history of diverse peoples, movements, and cultures, designating this site will help guarantee that our monuments better reflect the diversity of the country. Similar to the Pullman, Stonewall, Honouliuli, Reconstruction Era, and other national monuments, a Black Wall Street Historic Greenwood District monument would highlight an often-forgotten event in American history. By failing to acknowledge and memorialize this complex story, we are ignoring the history of Black success in the United States, along with the unjust and violent attempts to suppress it. Historically, we have ignored how this massacre represents just one of many atrocities against Black Americans in this country and the ways that oppression, racism, and discrimination persist in our history, culture, and politics.

By contrast, designating Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District a National Monument would not only be a step forward in preserving the legacy of this place but also serve as a warning that this moment in history must never be repeated. Right now, we can recognize and educate ourselves about our ugly past, but also reimagine what this place can look like for future generations.

The undersigned officials, descendants, and coalition of groups strongly urge the Biden Administration to designate a new national monument to commemorate Black Wall Street and the Historic Greenwood District.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Tiffany Crutcher
Executive Director
Terence Crutcher Foundation

Reuben Gant
Executive Director
John Hope Franklin Center for
Reconciliation

Freeman Culver
President
Greenwood Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Ellouise Cochrane
Greenwood Cultural Center

Sam Combs
Vice Chair, Board of Directors
Greenwood Rising

Bill White
Executive Director
Historic Greenwood District Main Street

Dr. Leroy M. Cole
Senior Pastor
Mt. Zion Baptist Church

Phil Armstrong
President & CEO
Oklahoma Center for Community & Justice

Frederick D. Freeman
Church Treasurer & Steward, Board Pro Temp
Vernon AME Church



February 27th, 2023

Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Biden:

On behalf of our coalition of elected officials and organizations, in Oklahoma and across the United States, we would like to thank the Administration for visiting Tulsa last year and acknowledging the 100th anniversary of the Greenwood massacre. Your visit brought national attention to an under-told story in American history, but we believe more can be done. We strongly believe that this area is worthy of National Monument status.

We are writing to urge you to use the Antiquities Act to designate a new national monument to commemorate the Tulsa Race Riot Massacre and Black Wall Street. With less than a quarter of our country's national parks devoted to recognizing the histories of diverse peoples, movements, and cultures, designating this site will help guarantee that our public lands reflect the diversity of the country. Similar to the Pullman, Stonewall, Honouliuli, and other recent national monuments, a Tulsa Race Riot Massacre monument would highlight an often-forgotten event in American history. By not acknowledging and memorializing this complex story, we are ignoring the history of Black success in the US, along with the unjust and violent attempt to suppress it. We ignore how this massacre represents just one of many injustices against Black folks in this country and the ways that racism and discrimination persist in our history, culture, and politics today.

By contrast, designating Black Wall Street a National Monument would not only be a step forward in preserving the legacy of this place but also serve as a warning that this moment in history must never be repeated. Right now, we have an opportunity to recognize and educate ourselves about our ugly past, but also reimagine what this place can look like for future generations.

The undersigned officials and coalition of groups strongly urge the Biden Administration to designate a new national monument to commemorate Tulsa's Race Riot Massacre. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bill White

Bill White, Executive Director
Historic Greenwood District Main Street

PO Box 481015

Tulsa, OK 74148

918-947-9989

May 12, 2024

Dear President Biden and Congress,

We write to you as a collective voice of leaders in the Black church across the country, asking you to establish the Black Wall Street National Monument across the Historic Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This long-due designation will finally honor the legacy of those who were killed in the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and recognize the profound resilience, agency, and fortitude of the Black community—both past and present—in the face of violent racism and oppression.

Our faith tradition places great importance on the act of remembering. The prophets warn against forgetting the times of exile, slavery, and oppression, and call us to always look back and confront the pains of the past as we hope for a future of justice and liberation. Modern prophets like John Hope Franklin continue to speak this truth: “if the house is to be set in order,” Mr. Franklin declared, “one cannot begin with the present; one must begin with the past.”

In this spirit, we strongly urge you to enshrine and preserve this significant space in American history through the designation of a national monument. We cannot forget the horrors of one of the bloodiest, most vile acts of collective racism in Jim Crow era America. We cannot forget the approximately 300 men and women who were murdered for no other reason than the color of their skin. We cannot forget the people who made up the thriving, vibrant community which was burned to the ground. And we cannot forget how, even in the face of this atrocity, the Black community of Tulsa showcased resilience in the rebuilding efforts immediately after the massacre.

Establishing the Black Wall Street national monument will not resolve the long history of injustice left in the wake of the massacre, but it is an important and necessary step forward. It will serve as a collective calling for our nation to remember the violence and hatred that is a direct result of the deeply rooted history of racism in this country but to also celebrate our collective hope and resilience as we bravely move forward together.

Sincerely,

Bishop C.K. Heath, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Birmingham, AL
 Bishop George D. Crenshaw, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Montgomery, AL
 Bishop Harry L. Seawright, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Birmingham, AL
 Bishop Teresa Jefferson-Snorton, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Birmingham, AL
 Bishop William Reese, Sr., Tuscaloosa, AL
 Rev. Freddie Robertson, Tuscaloosa, AL
 Rev. Pryce J. Battle, Sr., Phenix City, AL
 Bishop Michael Mitchell, African Methodist Episcopal Church, North Little, AR
 Dr. Bobby Patterson, Blytheville, AR
 Rev. Anthony J. Howard, Pine Bluff, AR
 Dr. Benjamin Thomas, Phoenix, AZ
 Dr. Cathy Clardy-Patterson, Phoenix, AZ
 Dr. Warren Stewart, Sr., Phoenix, AZ
 Pastor Victor Rushing, Sr., Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Terry Mackey, Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Albert Bolden, Mesa, AZ

Rev. Amos Lewis, Tucson, AZ
 Rev. D. Grady Scott, Tucson, AZ
 Rev. Marvin L. Hugley, Tucson, AZ
 Rev. Ratcliff Hughes, Tucson, AZ
 Rev. Reginald D. Watson, Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Reginald Steele, Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Ricky Wilson, Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Sherman Fort, Mesa, AZ
 Rev. Staccato Powell, Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Terry Marks, Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Troy C. Allen, Sr., Phoenix, AZ
 Rev. Weldon Tucker, Buckeye, AZ
 Bishop Charley Hames, Jr., Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Los Angeles, CA
 Bishop Clement W. Fugh, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Marina Delray, CA
 Bishop Francine A. Brookins, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Rancho Cucamonga, CA
 Bishop Jerry W. Macklin, 1st Asst. Presiding Bishop, Church of God in Christ, San Francisco, CA
 Bishop Sean Teal, Oakland, CA
 Rev. B. Alexander Island, Los Angeles, CA
 Rev. Melvin V. Wade, Sr., Los Angeles, CA
 Rev. Rondall Leggett, Marvin City, CA
 Rev. Bosie Kimber, New Haven, CN
 Bishop Acen Phillips, Aurora, CO
 Bishop Jerry Demmer, Denver, CO
 Bishop Kevin Foreman, Denver, CO
 Bishop Wayne McDonald, Denver, CO
 Bishop James B. Walker, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Hartford, CT
 Bishop James L. Davis, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, DC
 Bishop Ricky D. Helton, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Washington, DC
 Imam Dr. Talib M. Shareef, Washington, DC
 Rev. H. Lonel Edmonds, Washington, DC
 Bishop Silvester S. Beaman, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Wilmington, DE
 Bishop Albert Moore, Delray Beach, FL
 Bishop Craig P. Riley, Sr., Tallahassee, FL
 Bishop Frank Madison Reid, III, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Jacksonville, FL
 Bishop Marvin C. Zanders, II, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Orange Park, FL
 Bishop Nate Ziegler, Jacksonville, FL
 Deacon Bossie Hawkins, Tallahassee, FL
 Deacon Havord Francis, Monticello, FL
 Deacon Robert Brown, Fruitland Park, FL
 Deacon Willie Kuykendall, Lady Lake, FL
 Dr. Charlie Barfield, Madison, FL
 Dr. Curtis Thomas, Florida City, FL
 Dr. Derrick Hughes, Lauderdale, FL
 Dr. Ellis Cox, Opa-Locka, FL
 Dr. Joseph Marshall, Pensacola, FL

Dr. Malachi Clowers, Callahan, FL
Dr. Michael Chambers, Daytona Beach, FL
Dr. Robert Herring, Jacksonville, FL
Dr. Roderick Robinson, Jr., Tallahassee, FL
Dr. Tyler Harderman, Pensacola, FL
Elder James Brown, Jr., Tallahassee, FL
Elder Kenneth Duke, Miami, FL
Elder Melvin Crawford, Tallahassee, FL
Elder Myles Bryant, Pensacola, FL
Elder Rodney Stewart, Lloyd, FL
Evangelist Miner Brookins, Monticello, FL
Pastor John A. Evans, Sr., St Petersburg, FL
Pastor Michael Warren, Apopka, FL
Rev. Marcus Davidson, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Rev. Brett Snowden, Riverview, FL
Rev. Joseph Stevens, Florida City, FL
Rev./Dr. Lenard Johnson, Delray Beach, FL
Rev. A.M. Hill, West Palm Beach, FL
Rev. Albert Haddon, Leesburg, FL
Rev. Alexander Fountain, Live Oak, FL
Rev. Alonzo Brown, Leesburg, FL
Rev. Alonzo Fudge, Greenville, FL
Rev. Alzo Payne, Fellsmere, FL
Rev. Amos Rhoden, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Anthony Burrell, Lauderdale Lakes, FL
Rev. Anthony Parks, Lady Lake, FL
Rev. Arthur Jackson, III, Miami, FL
Rev. Arthur Stephens, Sr., Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Ben Ransom, Monticello, FL
Rev. Benjamin Carroll, Jr., West Palm Beach, FL
Rev. Bernard Wright, Titusville, FL
Rev. Brian Lawson, Dania Beach, FL
Rev. Bruce Wade, Titusville, FL
Rev. C.C. Lambert, Pensacola, FL
Rev. C.E. Glover, Fort Lauderdale, FL
Rev. Calvin Davis, Sr., Boca Raton, FL
Rev. Carl Reaves, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Carrie Mitchell-Long, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Cassandra Brockman, Monticello, FL
Rev. Charles Banks, Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Charles Smith, Jr., Monticello, FL
Rev. Clarence Ingram, Fort Pierce, FL
Rev. Claude Gibson, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Darius Jeffries, Cocoa, FL
Rev. David Bryant, Sr., Coca, FL
Rev. David Chandler, Riviera Beach, FL

Rev. David Green, Riviera Beach, FL
Rev. David Standifer, Tavares, FL
Rev. David Merrick, Oak Hill, FL
Rev. Dawayne Richardson, Miami, FL
Rev. Demetric R. Ford, Deerfield, FL
Rev. Dempsey Daniels, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Dennis Adams, Okahumpka, FL
Rev. Derek Howard, Crawfordville, FL
Rev. Derrick Anderson, Key West, FL
Rev. Derrick Mercer, Sr., Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Dock Roberts, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Donald McBride, Perry, FL
Rev. Donald Smith, Lacoochee, FL
Rev. Donald Bell, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Donnell Sanders, Fort White, FL
Rev. Douglas F. Young, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Douglas Hamilton, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Rev. E.L. Lock, Sr, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Earl Jackson, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Eddie Lynn, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Eldred Baldwin, Jr., Fort Pierce, FL
Rev. Erick Evans, Magnolia Park, FL
Rev. Ernest Brinkley, Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Ernest Burton, Monticello, FL
Rev. Ernest F. Raines, Greenville, FL
Rev. Evander Derico, Pompano Beach, FL
Rev. Evans Smith, Daytona Beach, FL
Rev. Floyd Peacock, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Frank Jenkins, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Frankie Robinson, Sr., Madison, FL
Rev. Franklin Clark, Miami, FL
Rev. Freddie Jackson, Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Fredrick Bell, Crawfordville, FL
Rev. G. Christopher Clark, Tangerine, FL
Rev. George Proctor, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Gerald Collins, Century, FL
Rev. Glen Miller, Miami, FL
Rev. Glenroy DeVeaux, Miami, FL
Rev. Gregory Williams, Miami Gardens, FL
Rev. Griffin Davis, Riviera Beach, FL
Rev. Henry A. Peoples, Miami, FL
Rev. Henry Arnold, Cantonment, FL
Rev. Henry Macon, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Herman Roberts, Lake Helen, FL
Rev. Hosea Montgomery, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Howard Siplin, Miami, FL

Rev. Hubert Thomas, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Hugh King, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Isaac Williams, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Izell Montgomery, Greenville, FL
Rev. J. Roy Morrison, Orlando, FL
Rev. J.L. Savage, Pensacola, FL
Rev. J.L. Talton, Pompano Beach, FL
Rev. James Allen, Leesburg, FL
Rev. James Bentley, West Palm Beach, FL
Rev. James Brown, Leesburg, FL
Rev. James Cook, Miami, FL
Rev. James Duval, Greenville, FL
Rev. James Lofton, Sr., Tallahassee, FL
Rev. James Shaw, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Jamie Smith, Milton, FL
Rev. Jeffrey Robinson, Daytona Beach, FL
Rev. Jermaine Gordon, Sr., Bushnell, FL
Rev. Jerry Thompson, Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Jimmie Bryant, Miami, FL
Rev. Joe C. Johnson, Hallandale Beach, FL
Rev. Joe Rowe, Madison, FL
Rev. John Donaldson, Oakland park, FL
Rev. John McMillon, Daytona Beach, FL
Rev. John Reshard, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. John Thomas, City Point, FL
Rev. Joseph Jones, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Joseph Simmons, Madison, FL
Rev. Joseph Wright, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Kearney, Pompano Beach, FL
Rev. Keith Butler, Sr., Opa-Locka, FL
Rev. Keith Canady, Live Oak, FL
Rev. Ken McGee, Miami, FL
Rev. Kenneth Harley, New Smyrna Beach, FL
Rev. Kenneth Pace, Sr., West Park, FL
Rev. Kent Carroll, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. L.A. Wilson, Vero Beach, FL
Rev. L.B. Johnson, Goulds, FL
Rev. L.D. Wesley, III, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Lance Bailey, Sr., Miami, FL
Rev. Larrie Lovett, II, Miami, FL
Rev. Larry Edwards, Daytona Beach, FL
Rev. Larry Hunt, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Larry Walthour, Opa-Locka, FL
Rev. Lee Johnson, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Leon Sims, Miami, FL
Rev. Louise Wallace, Lamont, FL

Rev. Marcus Hawkins, Madison, FL
Rev. Martia D. McCullough, Vero Beach, FL
Rev. Matthew Coombs, Madison, FL
Rev. Matthew Payne, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Melvin Roberts, Monticello, FL
Rev. Michael Hunter, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Michael Mitchell, Daytona Beach, FL
Rev. Michael Steward, Century, FL
Rev. Michael Warren, Apopka, FL
Rev. Michael Williams, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Nathaniel Harris, Deland, FL
Rev. O. Jermaine Simmons, Jr., Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Oliver Bradley, Greenville, FL
Rev. Otha Leverette, III, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Patrick Thomas, Fruitland Park, FL
Rev. Paul Blackmon, Sr., Pensacola, FL
Rev. Paul Leland, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Paul West, Miami, FL
Rev. Pedro McKelvin, Monticello, FL
Rev. Phillip Russell, Florida City, FL
Rev. Reginald Daniel, Monticello, FL
Rev. Reuben Mack, Sharpes, FL
Rev. Robert Butler, Jr., Perry, FL
Rev. Robert Daniels, Delray Beach, FL
Rev. Robert Likely, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Robert Porter, Pensacola, FL
Rev. Robert Smith, Daytona Beach, FL
Rev. Rodney L. Irving, Greenville, FL
Rev. Rodney Rumph, Naranja, FL
Rev. Ronald Taylor, Melbourne, FL
Rev. Rudolph Rolle, Umatilla, FL
Rev. Russell A. Wright, Sr., Panama City, FL
Rev. Sean McMillan, Ft. Lauderdale, FL
Rev. Shirley Washington, Lamont, FL
Rev. Silas Pinkney, Miami, FL
Rev. Stanley DeVerger, Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Stanley Walker, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. T.T. Shellman, Miami, FL
Rev. Terry Presley, Tallahassee, FL
Rev. Theodus Times, II, Deerfield, FL
Rev. Titus Hill, Jacksonville, FL
Rev. Tobbie Berrian, III, Monticello, FL
Rev. Tone Lundy, Sr., Wildwood, FL
Rev. Tony Graham, Perry, FL
Rev. Troy Bradley, Sr., Deland, FL
Rev. Tyrone Sanders, Riviera Beach, FL

Rev. Vernon George, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Vincent Brown, Delray Beach, FL
 Rev. W. Travis, Bagdad, FL
 Rev. W.J. Carpenter, Miami, FL
 Rev. W.J. Evans, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. W.W. Williams, Monticello, FL
 Rev. William Bradley, Gifford, FL
 Rev. William Gulley, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. William Hawkins, Eustis, FL
 Rev. William Hinson, Havana, FL
 Rev. William Richardson, III, Port Saint Lucie, FL
 Rev. William Roundtree, III, Fort Pierce, FL
 Rev. Willie Anderson, Molino, FL
 Rev. Willie Demps, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Willie L. Manning, Tallahassee, FL
 Rev. Willie Richardson, Vero Beach, FL
 Rev. Winston Anderson, Boca Raton, FL
 Rev. Zennie Peterson, Pensacola, FL
 Rev. Benjamin Parrott, Sr., Miami, FL
 Rev. Dr. W.M. Ramsey, Oakland park, FL
 Rev. James Duval, Monticello, FL
 Rev. William Washington, West Palm Beach, FL
 Rev./Dr W.L. Strange, Jr., Miami, FL
 Rev./Dr A.L. Durant, Sr., Pensacola, FL
 Rev./Dr James H. Miller, Sr., Warrington, FL
 Rev./Dr Keith Cloud, Greenville, FL
 Rev./Dr Martae Telfair-Smith, Jr., Madison, FL
 Rev./Dr Michael J. Johnson, Sr., Pensacola, FL
 Rev./Dr Michael Thompson, Pensacola, FL
 Rev./Dr Norman Freeman, Pompano Beach, FL
 Rev./Dr Quintin P. Woods, Palm Bay, FL
 Rev./Dr R.B. Holmes, Jr., Tallahassee, FL
 Rev./Dr Sterling George, Qunicy, FL
 Rev./Dr. Bentley Thomas, Saint Thomas, FL
 Rev./Dr. Herbert McGraw, Oak Hill, FL
 Rev./Dr. Isaac Manning, Jr., Monticello, FL
 Rev./Dr. Oliver Wells, Melbourne, FL
 Bishop Donald Lancaster, LaGrange, GA
 Bishop Henry A. Belin, Jr., African Methodist Episcopal Church, Atlanta, GA
 Bishop Thomas Brown, Sr., Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Atlanta, GA
 Dr. Riggins R. Earl, Jr., Atlanta, GA
 Rev. Reginald Jackson, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Atlanta, GA
 Bishop Edward Goodwin, Sr., Chicago, IL
 Bishop Eric L. Leake, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Flossmoor, IL
 Bishop John F. White, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago, IL
 Bishop Juan Morrison, Springfield, IL

Rev. T. Ray McJunkins, Springfield, IL
 Rev. A.W. Staten Jr., Chicago, IL
 Rev. A.W. Staten, Sr., Chicago Heights, IL
 Rev. Darren S. Hardaway, Chicago, IL
 Rev. Keenan Bond, Chicago, IL
 Dr. C.L. Bachus, Kansas City, KS
 Dr. Calvin W. Lewis, Kansas City, KS
 Dr. David Peoples, President, Progressive National Baptist Church, Lexington, KY
 Dr. Jeremiah L. Parks, Owensboro, KY
 Rev. Derrick L. Miles, Louisville, KY
 Bishop Rodney McFarland, Sr., Monroe, LA
 Bishop Wilfret Johnson, New Orleans, LA
 Dr. Samuel Tolbert, Jr, President, National Baptist Convention of America, Lake Charles, LA
 Rev./Dr S. C. Dixon, Baton Rouge, LA
 Bishop Dennis V. Proctor, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Ellicott, MD
 Bishop Joel Lykes, Jr., Baltimore, MD
 Bishop John R. Bryant, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Baltimore, MD
 Bishop W. Darin Moore, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Largo, MD
 Rev. Calvin Cage, Sr., Bowie, MD
 Bishop Drew Sheard, Detroit, MI
 Bishop James Atterberry, Benton Harbor, MI
 Bishop Nathaniel Wells, Jr., Muskegon, MI
 Bishop Neal Roberson, Flint, MI
 Bishop P.A. Brooks, Detroit, MI
 Bishop Robert Smith, Sr., White Cloud, MI
 Bishop Samuel Duncan, Jr., Lansing, MI
 Rev./Dr. Steve Bland, Sr, Detroit, MI
 Senior Bishop John Drew Sheard, Sr, Church of God in Christ, Detroit, MI
 Bishop Fred W. Washington, Minneapolis, MN
 Bishop Richard Howell, Jr., Minneapolis, MN
 Bishop Sidney Frye, Sr., Minneapolis, MN
 Bishop John Mitchel, Jr., Kinloch, MO
 Bishop Lawrence Wooten, St. Louis, MO
 Bishop Sylvester Williams, Sr, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Normandy, MO
 Bishop Stafford J. N. Wicker Jackson, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Jackson, MS
 Bishop Kenneth W. Carter, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Jackson, MS
 Bishop Michael A. Frencher, Sr., African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Canton, MS
 Bishop T.T. Scott, Clarksdale, MS
 Dr. Jerry Young, President, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., Jackson, MS
 Dr. John F. Johnson, Greenville, MS
 Rev. Nathaniel Horton, Columbus, MS
 Bishop Brain R. Thompson, Sr., African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Fayetteville, NC
 Bishop Darryl B. Starnes, Sr., African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Charlotte, NC
 Bishop E. Gardin, Jr., Monroe, NC
 Bishop John Parks, Salisbury, NC
 Bishop Kenneth Monroe, Red Springs, NC

Bishop Seth O. Lartey, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Winston-Salem, NC
Bishop Sir Walter Mack, Jr., Winston-Salem, NC
Bishop Stephen Williams, Clemmons, NC
Deacon Rydale Cowan, Statesville, NC
Deacon Ted Thompson, Statesville, NC
Dr. C Anthony Jones, Jr., Winston-Salem, NC
Dr. Dennis Leach, Winston-Salem, NC
Dr. Howard L Woods, Jr., Greensboro, NC
Dr. Johnny Freeman, Greensboro, NC
Dr. Joseph A Bryant, Redsville, NC
Dr. Kendall Jones, Sr., Winston-Salem, NC
Dr. Marion A Franks, Mocksville, NC
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Dr. A Paul Lowe, Jr., Winston-Salem, NC
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Rev. Henry Thomas, Frisco, TX
Rev. Ira L. Jones, Ben Wheeler, TX
Rev. Jamarkus Mumphy, Dallas, TX
Rev. James Gaines, Galveston, TX
Rev. James Larry, Garland, TX
Rev. James Smith, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Jason Peoples, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Jermaine Robertson, Dallas, TX
Rev. Jerry B Himes, Jr., Cleveland, TX
Rev. Jerry Jeter, Carthage, TX
Rev. Jerry L. Christian, Sr., Dallas, TX
Rev. Joe Amerson, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. John L Bates, Baytown, TX
Rev. Johnnie Dollarhide, Crowley, TX
Rev. Johnnie Brager, Arp, TX
Rev. Johnny Washington, Douglasville, TX
Rev. Jonathan L. Jones, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Jonathan R Taylor, Dickinson, TX
Rev. Karen Scruggs Simmons, Denison, TX
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Rev. Kathy R. Mack, Arlington, TX
Rev. Keaton Fuller, Denton, TX
Rev. Kenneth Franklin, Dallas, TX
Rev. Kenneth Holkingshed, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Kevin A. Brown, II, Galveston, TX
Rev. Kirthell Roberts, Mt. Pleasant, TX
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Rev. Larry Blackmon, Booth, TX
Rev. Larry Jaquors, Fort Worth, TX
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Rev. Leroy Napier, Jr., Garland, TX
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Rev. Linda S. Curry, Celina, TX
Rev. Lionel Hayes, Dallas, TX
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Rev. Louis Simpson, Jr., Galveston, TX
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Rev. Louise Simmons, Cedar Hill, TX
Rev. M.D. Dwyer, Galveston, TX
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Rev. Maurice Berry, Jr., Beaumont, TX
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Rev. Michael Mack, Dallas, TX
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Rev. Michael Waters, Dallas, TX
Rev. Nathaniel Brown, Galveston, TX
Rev. Ninevah Franklin, Dallas, TX
Rev. Norris D. Curry, Celina, TX
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Rev. Patricia McWilliams, Arlington, TX
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Rev. Paul Simmons, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Paul W. Wingate, Sr., Galveston, TX
Rev. Phyllis Proctor, Dallas, TX
Rev. Pshyara Thompson, Denton, TX
Rev. Ralph Emmerson, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Randy Harrison, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Rick Olsen, Baytown, TX
Rev. Ricky Scott, Dallas, TX
Rev. Rob S. Guy, Dallas, TX
Rev. Robert L. Jackson, Jr., Dallas, TX
Rev. Robert Samuel, Bon Weir, TX
Rev. Roderick Shepard, Sr., Arlington, TX
Rev. Ronald D. Richardson, Dallas, TX
Rev. Ronald Waddleton, Dallas, TX
Rev. Ronnie Maloy, Cedar Hill, TX
Rev. Roosevelt Johnson, Dallas, TX
Rev. Russell Fuller, Sr., Dallas, TX
Rev. S W Dotson, Conroe, TX
Rev. Shalanda Williams, Arlington, TX
Rev. Shawn Bronson, Commerce, TX
Rev. Sheldon Ballat, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Shella Williams, Abilene, TX
Rev. Sherryl Matlock, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Stephanie Drew, DeSoto, TX
Rev. Terry White, Dallas, TX

Rev. Thurman Berry, Sr., Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Tommy Johnson, Barrett Station, TX
Rev. Travis Hulett, Jr., Cleveland, TX
Rev. TRev. er Barnett, Dallas, TX
Rev. Van Carl Williams, DeSoto, TX
Rev. Vanessa Darden-Ingram, Bedford, TX
Rev. Vanessee Burns, Dallas, TX
Rev. Vashti J. Saint-Jean, Dallas, TX
Rev. Victory-Phyllis Davis, Dallas, TX
Rev. W.L. Brown, Galveston, TX
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Rev. William Gylmn, Fort Worth, TX
Rev. Woodrow Holman, Jr., Dallas, TX
Rev. Jerry L. Christian, Sr., Dallas, TX
Rev./Dr Van C. Williams, Dallas, TX
Senior Bishop Adam J. Richardson, African Methodist Episcopal Church, Dallas, TX
Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick, III, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Dallas, TX
Dr. Geoffrey V. Guns, Norfolk, VA
Rev. Nicole Guns, Chesapeake, VA
Rev. Archie Ivy, Milwaukee, WI
Rev. Keith T. Evans, Racine, WI



NPCA Positions on Legislation before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

May 13, 2024

Dear Senator,

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. On behalf of our 1.6 million members and supporters nationwide, we write to share our thoughts on select legislation ahead of a hearing in the Committee on Energy & Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks scheduled for May 15, 2024.

S. 2620 - Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation which would establish a new park unit bringing several land-based areas of the Chesapeake Bay under the protection of the National Park Service (NPS). This new national park unit would expand public access to the Bay's shores and waters, bring economic growth to nearby communities, and help the NPS, native Tribes, and Chesapeake watermen interpret thousands of years of impactful history. The protected sites would include the Thomas Point Shoal Lighthouse, The Burtis House, and Whitehall in Annapolis, Maryland, and the North Beach of Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia.

S. 2743 – Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation to establish a new national heritage area in New York with one reservation. Any expansion of the National Heritage Area System must be accompanied by a commensurate increase in funding levels for heritage areas via the NPS Heritage Partnership Preservation program, which remains underfunded.

S. 2784 – to amend the Dayton Aviation Heritage Preservation Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation which would adjust the boundary of the Dayton Aviation National Heritage Area. This modification is necessary to incorporate additional resources into the heritage area's interpretation and management array.

S. 3534 – Fire Island AIDS Memorial Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation with the understanding that the memorial will enhance interpretation of the cultural landscape which has long co-existed at this ecologically-sensitive park site. This memorial should highlight the national significance of the AIDS epidemic to educate park visitors while also honoring the memory of those affected by the epidemic.

S. 3542 – Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Boundary Modification Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation which would allow the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to expand to include portions of Bayou Lafourche. This modification would provide heritage area managers with the opportunity to enhance their interpretive and preservation priorities and services provided to their constituents.

S. 3568 / H.R. 3448 – American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation which strengthens the ability to protect and rehabilitate battlefields across the country through the American Battlefield Protection Program managed by NPS. The bill also expands the list of organizations and entities, including tribes, eligible to directly receive American Battlefield Protection Program grants, targets ABPP grants towards

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

777 6th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001 | 800.628.7275 | npca.org



priority battlefield protection, enhancement, and restoration projects, and “creates a process for expanding and updating battlefield boundaries.”

S. 4209 – to provide greater regional access to the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument: NPCA **supports** this legislation which would make Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument more accessible to residents and visitors alike. The bill allows the Park Service to acquire land from willing sellers to facilitate a new entrance to the park on existing roads from Millinocket just south of the monument. The larger vision for Katahdin has included a southern entrance where there are many amenities including lodging, restaurants and retailers. With the opening of a new philanthropically-led visitor center in the monument this summer, this bill is perfectly timed to allow the Park Service to acquire these roads as they plan for increasing visitation.

S. 4216 – Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act: NPCA **conditionally supports** this legislation to establish the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve in the State of Georgia. NPCA strongly believes that the current Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park is worthy of expansion and elevation to National Park status. However, we would like to work with the bill’s sponsors and the Committee on several specific issues in the legislation as written.

Congressional approval of this designation would allow for co-management of a National Park System unit by a historically removed Tribe. At the same time, we acknowledge the lack of inclusion of other Tribes with a connection to this site. Given the significance of this proposed management structure, NPCA urges amendment of this bill to strengthen the Advisory Council (Section 5) by the addition of at least two members to include: 1) the President of the College of the Muscogee Nation – to advise on the training and development of tribal members to fulfill the hiring preference provision of the legislation (Section 4d) – and 2) the Assistant to the Director of the National Park Service, Native American Affairs Liaison –to incorporate high-level agency expertise on emerging co-management practices. NPCA would further urge that one of the Advisory Council seats dedicated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should similarly reflect high-level agency expertise on emerging co-management practices within the National Wildlife Refuge System.

While the Advisory Council is tasked with producing recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior on the creation of a co-management plan, we believe the bill should have a separate provision for the development of a co-management agreement between applicable tribes and the Park Service. Further, the bill should ensure opportunities for the public and interested organizations to comment on a draft management plan and a co-management agreement before they are finalized. Additionally, we are concerned about the provision in the bill requiring the Park Service to implement cultural resource interpretation at Bond Swamp National Wildlife Refuge as this approach may not comport with the Park Service’s duties and mission. We are also concerned about the various provisions on military activities including allowing “tactical ground parties” and how this may conflict with visitor experience in the park unit.

S. 4222 – Mojave National Preserve Boundary Adjustment Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation which incorporates the Castle Mountains National Monument into the Mojave National Preserve in the California desert. Castle Mountains National Monument is surrounded on three sides by the Mojave National Preserve, and both units of the National Park System share the same budget. Consolidation streamlines management and planning which supports conservation and recreation goals in this region.

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S. 4227 – Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act: NPCA **supports** this legislation which expands the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park in California, consistent with the findings of the Park Service’s 2016 Boundary Expansion Study. The federal lands to be incorporated are surrounded on three sides by Joshua Tree National Park. Including these lands in Joshua Tree supports conservation and recreation goals in this region.

S. 4228 – to redesignate the Cottonwood Visitor Center at Joshua Tree National Park as the “Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center”: NPCA **supports** this legislation that recognizes the significant, decades-long efforts by Senator Dianne Feinstein to conserve Joshua Tree National Park and the California desert for the benefit of all Americans. Senator Feinstein championed the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 that established Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park and the Mojave National Preserve.

S. 4259 – to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land as the Lahaina National Heritage Area, and for other purposes: NPCA **supports** this legislation which calls for a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of potentially designating the Lahaina National Heritage Area. We also note that the addition of new heritage areas must be accompanied by a commensurate increase in the funding of the National Heritage Area program via the NPS Heritage Partnership Program.

H.R. 4984 - D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act: NPCA **supports** this bill to transfer administrative jurisdiction over the Stadium Campus from the NPS to the General Services Administration, which will collaborate with the District of Columbia to efficiently plan for appropriate uses of the land going forward. We support the requirements detailed in this bill to ensure that there are no adverse impacts to any lands under jurisdiction of the NPS, including surrounding wetlands, as well as improved public water access to the Anacostia River and preservation of the Anacostia River Trail. The Park Service is guided by the Organic Act of 1916 and should remain so. There is no standard for “material degrade” of a National Park System unit, and Congress should not create a lower standard of protection for a park unit.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Christina Hazard
Legislative Director

NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

777 6th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001 | 800.628.7275 | npca.org

*** Archery Trade Association *** Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies *** Backcountry Hunters & Anglers *** Black Brant Group *** Boone and Crockett Club *** California Deer Association *** California Waterfowl Association *** California Wild Sheep Foundation *** Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation *** Conservation Force *** Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports *** Dallas Safari Club *** Houston Safari Club *** National Deer Association *** National Shooting Sports Foundation *** Orion: The Hunter's Institute *** Pope & Young Club *** Professional Outfitters and Guides of America *** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation *** Safari Club International *** Sportsmen's Alliance *** Suisun Resource Conservation District *** Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership *** Tulare Basin Wetlands Association *** Whitetails Unlimited *** Wild Sheep Foundation *** Wildlife Forever ***

May 17, 2024

Sen. Joe Manchin, Chair
Energy & Natural Resources Committee
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Sen. John Barrasso, Ranking Member
Energy & Natural Resources Committee
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso:

We write to thank you for holding a hearing on the Mojave National Preserve Boundary Adjustment Act (S. 4222), legislation that would restore hunting access to the more than 20,000 acres of public lands within the Castle Mountains National Monument. Our organizations collectively represent millions of Americans who care deeply about wildlife conservation, public lands, and public access. We now ask you to consider S. 4222 in a committee business meeting so that it may be reported to the full Senate, where we further urge its passage.

The Castle Mountains are a special place that support habitat for quail, chukar, rabbit, mule deer, and a growing population of desert bighorn sheep. Conserving this important habitat is critical. At the same time, access to public hunting land has become increasingly valuable to Californians. This access allows sportsmen and women to actively participate in something they value: the conservation and management of game species and their habitats, creating more advocates for the health of these lands.

S. 4222 would transfer the lands within the current Castle Mountains National Monument boundaries into the adjacent Mojave National Preserve, expanding the Preserve and reinstating hunting access to these lands, while maintaining the existing protections for the Castle Mountains under NPS management. This proposal is the culmination of years of effort and collaboration by local stakeholders and will ensure the future of this irreplaceable landscape. Congress can complete this important achievement in conservation by restoring hunting access to this landscape.

The National Park Service has a positive history of working with state wildlife management agencies to provide hunting opportunities on Preserve lands. Placing this land inside the Preserve is both a better cultural fit within the NPS and will promote more efficient management activities.

Specifically, this legislation would facilitate guidance from the Department of the Interior to consolidate management plans on connected parcels of public lands to provide greater certainty for studying, restoring, and actively managing wildlife and their habitats, as well as supporting the future of hunting, fishing, and recreational access across all lands administered by the Department of the Interior.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to resolving this important issue through your leadership. We respectfully ask that you advance this legislation.

CC:

Honorable U.S. Senator Alex Padilla
Honorable U.S. Senator Laphonza Butler
Honorable U.S. Representative Jay Obernolte

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Black Brant Group
Boone and Crockett Club
California Deer Association
California Waterfowl Association
California Wild Sheep Foundation
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Dallas Safari Club
Houston Safari Club
National Deer Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
Orion: The Hunter's Institute
Pope & Young Club
Professional Outfitters and Guides of America
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
Suisun Resource Conservation District
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever



**TESTIMONY OF MURIEL BOWSER,
MAYOR OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**Before the Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources,
Subcommittee on National Parks**

Angus S. King, Jr., Chairman

Steve Daines, Ranking Member

**H.R. 4984, D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial
Stadium Campus Revitalization Act**

May 15, 2024

H.R. 4984 D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act

Date: Wednesday, May 15, 2024

Chairman King and members of the Subcommittee on National Parks, I, Muriel Bowser, duly elected Mayor of the District of Columbia, submit this statement on behalf of nearly 700,000 residents. As Mayor, I am responsible for the economic growth and stability of the District, as well as the health and well-being of our residents. Importantly, I have learned in this role that recreation, and the facilities where recreation happens, contribute greatly to the overall wellness of our community.

With this understanding, and on behalf of the nearly 700,000 residents who call Washington, DC home, as well as the 21million annual visitors to the District, I humbly request the passage of H.R. 4984, the D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act. The RFK Memorial Stadium Campus has always been in the possession and control of the District, both when the District was a Federal agency and as a municipality.

H.R. 4984 originated in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced by Chairman James Comer of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee and our Congresswoman, Eleanor Holmes Norton. For more than 30 years,

Congresswoman Norton has worked with Congress on legislation to make the nation's capital a more dynamic place to live, work, and visit. This monumental legislation has the potential to transform and expand both recreational and economic opportunities in the District of Columbia for our residents, our region, and the visitors who come to our city each year.

Washington, DC has a rich tradition of recreation and sport. We are proud that for three consecutive years Washington, DC has been ranked the number one big city park system in the nation by the Trust for Public Land through its annual ParkScore Index, which ranks the 100 most populous U.S. cities and is considered the gold standard for park evaluation.

This very honorable distinction recognizes that we have federal parks and local recreation amenities that complement one another – a system that is the result of a strong, trusting, and longstanding partnership between the District and the National Park Service. Look no further than the revitalization of Franklin Park in downtown. This once-underutilized greenspace that, over the years, had fallen into disrepair has now become a hub of activity for residents, downtown office workers, and tourists alike. In addition to having beautiful spaces and a playground for children, the park frequently hosts movie nights, festivals, concerts, and more. The

transformation of Franklin Park was only made possible through a Cooperative Management Agreement executed between the District and NPS.

This partnership is not new. The DC Stadium Act of 1957 is the foundational example of the early trust NPS placed in the District. Of course, to many DC residents, the RFK site is synonymous with the glory years of the Washington football franchise now known as the Commanders. It was also the home of the Washington Senators and enabled the return of Major League Baseball to the District with the Washington Nationals. DC United also called the site home during their early years and it was there that the team won multiple Major League Soccer titles. Beyond professional sports, RFK hosted countless high-school and college athletic competitions. As a native Washingtonian, I personally enjoyed the winning spirit at RFK.

Today, however, the winning spirit along the Anacostia River banks can only be found on a handful of youth soccer fields, surrounded by eroding parking lots and lacking any significant investments. Despite investments in these fields and nearby trails, most of the 190-acre campus sits empty day in and day out. Instead of connecting our community, or serving as a grand entryway on the east side of our monumental core, it is a mostly desolate sea of asphalt.

We can do better. The District can transform and activate the RFK campus so that it becomes a world-class destination for families, residents, visitors, and athletes, while also better connecting our beautiful waterfront and the neighborhoods along its banks. This revitalization will complement investments already underway, including investments in the 20-mile Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, led by the District's Department of Transportation; investments in The Fields at RFK, managed by Events DC; and investments in an environmental programming on Kingman and Heritage Islands, under the stewardship of the DC Department of Energy and Environment. We envision increased access to organized recreation and leisure activities such as cycling and kayaking, and more outdoor space for cultural activations. We also see the potential for economic development, which could include housing and professional sports.

From the perspective of youth sports, we envision the RFK campus becoming a premier destination for youth athletic competition. From basketball to cheerleading to boxing to ice skating and track and field, the District is home to many young athletes at the top of their sport. Unfortunately, without a centralized home or training facility, our athletes routinely travel outside of DC to compete in the highest-level tournaments and events. My vision is for Washington, DC to host those events. That way we can not only showcase our local talent, but more

families, coaches, and organizations will see DC as a launching pad for America's athletes.

The amenities at this type of sports complex could include:

- Olympic swimming pool
- Gymnastics training facility
- Indoor track and multipurpose field
- Boxing training facility
- Climbing center and obstacle course
- Health and Fitness Club
- Indoor bowling alley
- Indoor skating rink
- Learning & creativity center for children
- Amphitheatre
- Indoor/outdoor café
- Outdoor and Indoor basketball and tennis courts

The expansive potential for uses at the RFK campus is why I included seed funding in my budget to build a DC Department of Parks and Recreation Sports Complex.

I unequivocally seek the passage of this legislation. However, to become a reality, the work of this Committee and, indeed, this Senate is essential.

Today, the RFK site is at a legal stalemate bound by a nearly 70-year-old lease that expires in 14 years. This stalemate prevents the comprehensive development necessary to revitalize the site. The District has a proven history of activating NPS land to premier conditions that are consistent with a world-class capital city. We did it at Franklin Park, we've transformed federal spaces across DC, including at the Wharf, the St. Elizabeths East campus, at Walter Reed, and, given the opportunity, we will do it at RFK.

Please urge your colleagues in the Senate to support expeditious passage of this legislation. Thank you.

May 17, 2024

The Honorable Angus King
Chair
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
National Parks Subcommittee
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
National Parks Subcommittee
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Mojave National Preserve Boundary Adjustment Act (S.4222)

Dear Chair King and Ranking Member Daines:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations representing Californians invested in the protection of the environment and conservation of public lands, we write to share our support for the Mojave National Preserve Boundary Adjustment Act. Through the expansion of the Mojave National Preserve to include lands within the inheld Castle Mountains National Monument this legislation would improve management efficiencies for the National Park Service and codify protections for more than 20,000 acres of intact desert ecosystem.

Designated through the use of the Antiquities Act in 2016, the Castle Mountains National Monument connects high quality desert habitat between the New York Mountains to the Northwest and the Piute Mountains to the Southeast where the Lainfair Valley watershed and aquifer feeds the Piute Spring – the only perennial stream and riparian corridor in the Preserve. A critical linkage for plants, animals and water, the Castle Mountains area hosts Joshua tree, pinyon pine and juniper forests as well as desert grasslands that include 28 species of native grasses, over half of which are rare. This biodiverse Mojave Desert ecosystem provides important habitat for desert bighorn sheep in addition to species of special concern such as Swainson’s hawk, golden eagle, Bendire’s thrasher and gray vireo, as well as the threatened desert tortoise.

With an increasing populace and pressure on wild places, it is more important than ever that special places are permanently protected from growing development and industrial degradation. This legislation represents decades of dedicated work and collaboration with a broad group of stakeholders to improve the management of this irreplaceable landscape. Historic efforts have sought to include this landscape within the Mojave National Preserve and this legislation would finalize that intention by codifying durable protections and resiliency. The expansion of the Mojave National Preserve would also improve efficiencies and management by the National Park Service for this important ecosystem. This follows guidance from the Department of the Interior to consolidate management plans for contiguous units of public lands and ensure greater consistency.

We encourage Congress to build on the history of conservation success in the California desert by expanding the Mojave National Preserve.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to solidifying support for protection of the Mojave Desert through your leadership. We respectfully ask that you advance this legislation.

Sincerely,

Linda Castro, Assistant Policy Director, CalWild

Frazier Haney, Executive Director, The Wildlands Conservancy

Kelly Herbison, Executive Director, Mojave Desert Land Trust

cc: The Honorable Senator Alex Padilla
The Honorable Senator Laphonza Butler
The Honorable Representative Jay Obernolte

STATEMENT OF CHRIS CASSIDY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MUSEUM FOUNDATION, SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD OF THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS HEARING CONCERNING H.R. 2717, THE HERSHEL "WOODY" WILLIAMS NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MONUMENT LOCATION ACT.

MAY 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and esteemed members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the concerns raised by the Department of the Interior regarding H.R. 2717, which seeks to authorize the establishment of a monument on the National Mall to honor Medal of Honor recipients. While we deeply respect the Department's commitment to preserving the integrity of the Reserve, we humbly offer a rebuttal to their stance on this matter. We realize that the Department's position reflects the governing statute, which ties their hands, but to which Congress has left itself the prerogative to grant exemptions.

We sincerely appreciate the Department's dedication to safeguarding the Reserve and its historical significance. However, the American story is still unfolding. Current and future generations will continue to impact society in ways we should memorialize in our most cherished places of national significance. To that end, we believe there are innovative solutions that can honor the heroism of Medal of Honor recipients without compromising the integrity of this sacred space.

Firstly, we are not seeking any additional acreage. Instead, we propose exploring creative options for inclusion in the Reserve, such as integrating the monument into existing structures or utilizing available vertical surfaces, such as the faces of existing plinths, thus making efficient and respectful use of space. By building vertically, we can pay homage to our nation's heroes while minimizing the footprint on the Reserve and preserving its open spaces and lines of sight.

It is essential to thoughtfully consider the proposed scale of a commemorative work, especially within the Reserve. Ensuring that the National Medal of Honor Monument is of an appropriate scale will help maintain the integrity of the National Mall while still providing a significant and respectful tribute to our Medal of Honor recipients.

Furthermore, we contest the notion that establishing the National Medal of Honor Monument would detract from the practical uses of the Reserve. On the contrary, the monument could serve as a focal point for national celebrations, anniversaries, and veterans' philanthropies, enriching the experience of visitors to the National Mall and providing a solemn space for reflection and remembrance.

We recognize the Department's concerns about preserving the Mall's open spaces and existing architecture. However, we believe that the establishment of the National Medal of Honor Monument would enhance, rather than detract from, the Mall's significance as our nation's premier civic space. By commemorating the values and sacrifices of our Medal of Honor recipients, we uphold the very ideals that the National Mall symbolizes—unity, liberty, and democracy.

As you know, the Commemorative Works Act explicitly allows for congressional exceptions to the general restrictions on the development of the Reserve. This is outlined in Section 8908 of Title 40 of the U.S. Code. Section 8908(c) states: "Congress may by law specifically authorize a commemorative work to be located in the Reserve."

There are historical precedents where Congress has granted exceptions to the embargo on new commemorative works in the Reserve. The World War II Memorial, despite initial restrictions, was ultimately approved and has since become a revered site for national remembrance. This precedent underscores the possibility and appropriateness of making selective exceptions that serve to honor significant contributions to our nation's history.

It's also worth remembering that the Medal of Honor was established by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War, a period when the United States was striving to hold itself together. The creation of this highest military honor was meant to recognize extraordinary acts of valor and to inspire unity and perseverance during one of the nation's most trying times. This historical context further underscores the importance of appropriately commemorating these acts of heroism and the values that underpin the Medal of Honor on our National Mall.

In conclusion, we respectfully urge the Subcommittee and Congress to exercise its prerogative to grant an exemption to the embargo on new commemorative works on the Reserve for the National Medal of Honor Monument by approving H.R. 2717. Please reconsider the Department's opposition to H.R. 2717 and allow us to explore creative solutions that honor our nation's heroes while preserving the integrity of the Reserve. Together, we can ensure that future generations have a tangible reminder of the extraordinary acts of valor displayed by our brave men and women in uniform.



24 E. Franklin Street
New Freedom, PA 17349
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support@creationcare.org

May 14, 2024

Ref: Evangelicals Support National Monument Designation of "Black Wall Street" in the Historic Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma

Dear Member,

As evangelical Christians, we commit ourselves to the God of reconciliation who is "setting things right" (Romans 3:22, MSG). Reconciliation requires remembrance, an act Scripture places great importance on.

In this spirit, over 15,390 pro-life Christians – including 10,900 in Oklahoma – have registered their support to designate "Black Wall Street" in the Historic Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma -- and the site of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre – as a national monument. Establishing the Black Wall Street national monument is an important and necessary step toward our national healing as we bravely move forward together in repentance and collective hope and resilience.

On behalf of our fellow evangelicals, the Evangelical Environmental Network supports **The Historic Greenwood District - Black Wall Street National Monument Establishment Act (S. 3543)**. We are grateful to Senator Lankford for his leadership on this bill and thank co-sponsors Senators Booker, Cornyn, Heinrich, and Hickenlooper.

This Act represents a critical step forward for national healing and reconciliation, and we hope to see it quickly advanced.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Jessica Moerman
President/CEO
Evangelical Environmental Network



May 16, 2024

The Honorable Angus King
Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks
133 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator King and Members of the Subcommittee,

Until his passing in 2022, my grandad Hershel “Woody” Williams was the last living recipient of the Medal of Honor from the WWII generation. He had the privilege of wearing the Medal and representing the values it represents for most of his life. He viewed it as an incredible privilege and a great responsibility.

After returning home from the war, Woody’s life was dedicated to serving his country and community with a particular emphasis on doing all he could to support veterans and Gold Star Families. In fact, because of the foundation he established and his tireless efforts, there are now Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments established all-across this great nation. These are special places for grieving families to heal and for local citizens to reflect on the sacrifices so many have made for the freedoms we enjoy.

Shortly after my grandad’s passing, Congressmen Moore and Veasey decided to honor his legacy by naming the National Medal of Honor Monument Location Act after him. My family and I are incredibly humbled by this honor, and we know our beloved Woody is smiling down on us all knowing the impact he and his fellow Medal of Honor recipients will be able to have on future generations of Americans through this special monument.

The National Medal of Honor Monument isn’t a monument to individuals or even to commemorate acts of valor. It is to serve as a constant reminder and inspiration to all who encounter it that choosing to act on behalf of others in moments that matter is something all of us can do. Medal of Honor recipients are ordinary people who took extraordinary action and we are all born with that same potential. The Lord gave each of us a limitless well of courage and it is up to each of us to use it – and we can never use it up. This monument will truly be a beacon for these ideals and the values which underpin the Medal of Honor.

I understand there are many factors which go into deciding if a monument is allowed in the reserve on the National Mall. Our family believes that the country’s highest recognition for service is deserving of this special distinction.

Finally, my grandad and every recipient I have had the privilege of knowing are extremely humble people and the monument we are hoping to construct will be equally humble. We want a meaningful location, but we don’t want a large or sprawling structure. We are seeking a humble acknowledgement of the values which preserve our nation and the individuals who practice those values and bring them to life.

Thank you,

Chad L. Graham
Grandson of Medal of Honor Recipient, CWO4 Hershel “Woody” Williams, USMC (Ret.), Iwo Jima

Chad L. Graham - 1513 Cedar Court - Simpsonville, KY 40067 - 859.621.5531



**Testimony of
Noah B. Mehrkam, Trustee
American Battlefield Trust**

**Before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks**

May 15, 2024

Testimony of Noah B. Mehrkam, American Battlefield Trust (continued)

Page 2 of 4

May 15, 2024

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to the committee. My name is Noah Mehrkam, and I am a member of the Board of Trustees of the American Battlefield Trust. As a native West Virginian, I am encouraged by how American Battlefield Protection Program grants have been used to save battlefield land at Harpers Ferry and elsewhere in West Virginia. I respectfully request passage by this committee of legislation that will greatly benefit battlefield preservation in my home state as well as other parts of the nation: the *American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act (S. 3568)*.

The American Battlefield Trust is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving America's remaining Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War battlefields. Thanks to the generosity of our 500,000 members and supporters nationwide, the Trust has protected more than 58,000 acres of critically important battlefield land in 25 states. We could not have performed our mission without the support of Congress and the cooperation of the National Park Service and, specifically, the American Battlefield Protection Program.

This legislation before you today, which currently enjoys the support of a bipartisan group of cosponsors, would take an already successful federal program, and make it more efficient, ensuring the preservation, restoration and interpretation of our nation's most hallowed grounds as an enduring legacy of America's semiquincentennial observance in 2026.

American Battlefield Protection Program

America's battlefields are irreplaceable parts of our shared national heritage. When preserved, these battlefields serve as outdoor classrooms to educate current and future generations about the defining moments in our country's history. They are living memorials, not just to the soldiers who fought and died there, but to all who have proudly worn our nation's uniform. Preserved battlefields are also economic drivers for communities, generating tourism dollars that are extremely important to state and local economies. Battlefield visitors, who typically travel in groups and as part of families, tend to stay longer and spend more than other types of tourists.

The American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) has been THE key tool of the past quarter century to ensure these hallowed grounds are preserved for generations to come. The program traces its origins to 1990, when Congress created the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (CWSAC), which produced a report outlining the most important Civil War battlegrounds, prioritizing them according to preservation status and historic significance. In addition, the Commission also recommended that Congress establish a federal matching grant program to encourage private sector investment in battlefield preservation. In 2007, a similar report was submitted to Congress by the National Park Service (NPS), identifying the key battlefields of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. To date, ABPP's Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants have been used to preserve more than 36,000 acres of previously unprotected battlefield land in 20 states from these three formative conflicts.

Enhancing a Successful Program

ABPP is a program that *works*. It is responsible for one of the most effective public private preservation partnerships in the country. The Trust and our partners from Shepherdstown, West Virginia to Nashville, Tennessee; from Fort Ticonderoga, New York to Glorieta Pass, New Mexico; from Princeton, New Jersey to

Testimony of Noah B. Mehrkam, American Battlefield Trust (continued)

Page 3 of 4

May 15, 2024

Vicksburg, Mississippi have put this program to work to preserve battlefields from the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and Civil War. This bill, introduced by Senators Tim Kaine of Virginia and Cindy Hyde-Smith of Mississippi, would make an already effective program even stronger. With the nation's 250th anniversary two years away, it is imperative we do everything we can to save the places where America was forged, including strengthening the tools available to ensure our country's history is preserved, and its stories told.

This bill would make four minor but important updates to the program. The first modification would enable non-profits and Native American tribes to apply directly for the land acquisition grants. At present, the only applicants for these grants are state and local public entities; nonprofits like the Trust must find a government pass through to submit the applications, which can often add months to the application process, jeopardizing land deals with willing sellers who typically wish to sell their properties quickly. State and local governments would still be eligible to apply.

The permanent protection of America's hallowed ground for future generations is primary purpose of the American Battlefield Trust. In allowing non-profit organizations to apply for Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants, state and local governments would be relieved of the considerable burdens of applying for the grants and managing the grant process for projects that they are not a party to. That is especially important in states and localities that do not have the staff or expertise in federal grantmaking. The legislation would allow them to dedicate their limited staff and resources to other priorities.

The second revision to the existing authorization would create a mechanism for NPS to modify existing core and study battlefield area boundaries to include new or updated information about the actions that took place at these sites. Periodical updates to the reports, issued in 1993 and 2007, would ensure that new, authoritative research about the historic extent of battlefields, obtained through advances in technology or archaeology since the reports were first published, can be incorporated by the NPS so that these lands would be eligible for acquisition, interpretation and restoration grants administered by ABPP.

The final two elements of this bill would ensure that these funds will be used exclusively for the preservation and restoration of high-priority battlefield land. As written, the current ABPP statute allows land grants to be used for all sites listed in the 2007 *Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States*. This report includes not only battlefields, but non-battlefield associated sites related to these conflicts – structures, ships and other landmarks in many cases are not on battlefield land. This modification would amend the statute to limit Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants to battlefield land, as the Congress intended when the Revolutionary War and War of 1812 battlefields were added to the program in 2014, and as is currently the case for Civil War battlefields.

Finally, the bill would modify the relatively new Battlefield Restoration Grant program, authorized by Congress in 2019, to allow them to be utilized for all protected battlefields listed in the two aforementioned reports. Current statute limits these grants, which are designed to restore battlefield lands to their wartime appearance by removing non-historic structures and reclaiming other features such as road traces and tree lines, to land saved with ABPP Battlefield Land Acquisition Grants, excluding many previously preserved sites across the country. The proposed change would allow for sites previously protected – Picacho Peak in Arizona, Brandywine Battlefield in Pennsylvania, and Sailors Creek, Virginia, to name a few – to utilize these funds, ensuring that more battlefield parks can take advantage of this valuable program to improve the interpretive experience and enable visitors to connect with American history through the power of place.

Testimony of Noah B. Mehrkam, American Battlefield Trust (continued)

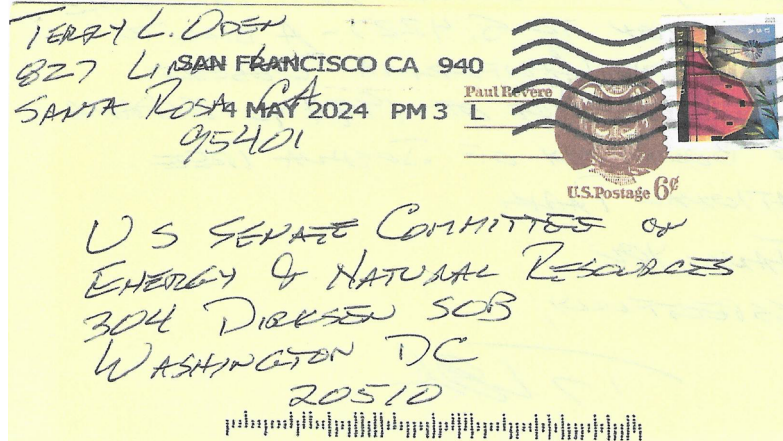
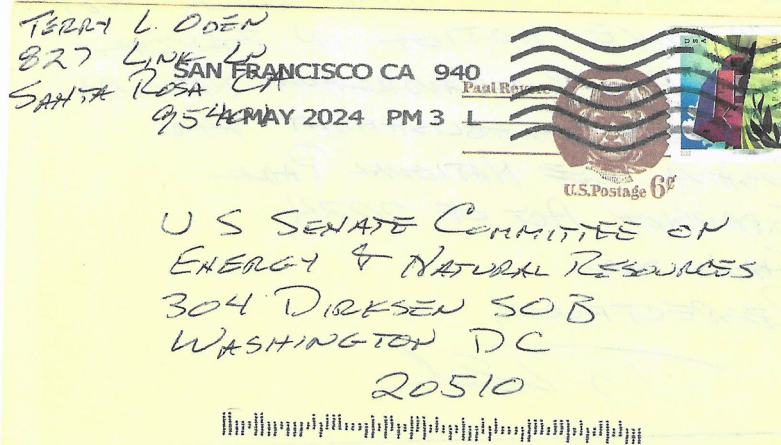
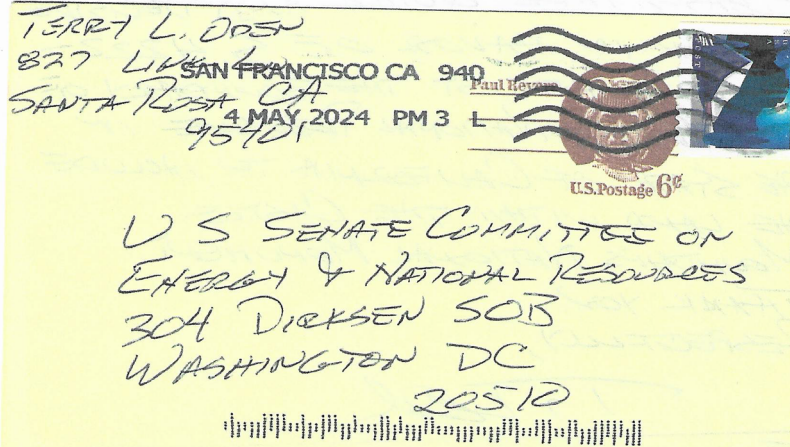
Page 4 of 4

May 15, 2024

Conclusion

These small but important modifications to the American Battlefield Protection Program will ensure its readiness to preserve America's historic treasures as we approach our nation's 250th birthday. The Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 and the Civil War were defining moments in our country's history. The battlefields of these conflicts are open spaces and outdoor classrooms that commemorate the sacrifices of those who fought and died on these hallowed fields. The American Battlefield Protection Program's grant programs remain irreplaceable tools with widespread support from Congress for the past quarter century. This bill will strengthen the program for years to come.

Chairman King and Ranking Member Daines, I sincerely hope you and your subcommittee will support the *American Battlefield Protection Program Enhancement Act* (S. 3568). We look forward to working closely with you to continue the important work of preserving America's battlefield lands. Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee.



PLEASE, TAKE QUICK AND DECISIVE
ACTION IN FAVOR OF S. 4222 -
A BILL TO ADJUST THE BOUNDARY OF
THE MOJAVE NATIONAL RESERVE IN
THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA TO INCLUDE
THE LAND WITHIN THE CASTLE
MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT.
THANK YOU
RESPECTFULLY,

T. L. L.

I ASK YOU TO TAKE QUICK AND
DECISIVE ACTION IN FAVOR
OF S. 4132 - CAUCKWALA NATIONAL
MONUMENT ESTABLISHMENT AND
JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL PARK
EXPANSION ACT OF 2024.
THANK YOU.
RESPECTFULLY,

T. L. L.

PLEASE, GIVE QUICK AND FAVORABLE
ATTENTION TO S. 4227 - A BILL TO
AMEND THE CALIFORNIA DESERT
PROTECTION ACT OF 1994 TO EXPAND
THE BOUNDARY OF JOSHUA TREE
NATIONAL PARK.
THANK YOU.
RESPECTFULLY,

T. L. L.

STATEMENT OF MASTER CHIEF SPECIAL WARFARE OPERATOR (SEAL) BRITT SLABINSKI, BOARD MEMBER, NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MUSEUM FOUNDATION, PRESIDENT, CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR SOCIETY, SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD OF THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS HEARING CONCERNING H.R. 2717, THE HERSEL "WOODY" WILLIAMS NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MONUMENT LOCATION ACT.

MAY 2024

Thank you to the Chairman and Ranking Member, as well as all the members of this subcommittee, for your thoughtful consideration of H.R. 2717. I also want to thank Congressmen Moore and Veasey, the bipartisan co-sponsors of this important legislation. I am sincerely thankful to the United States House of Representatives, which unanimously passed this bill, named for my friend, Medal of Honor recipient Woody Williams, out of committee and on the House floor last year.

It is a privilege to submit this statement of support for a piece of legislation named for an individual admired for his service in uniform and for all the ways he continued to serve as a private citizen. Wearing the Medal of Honor rosette doesn't just remind me of my good friend and his service to our country; it is also a testament to the idea that the Medal of Honor doesn't belong to a person or even a generation. It is a torch passed through time. The values represented by the Medal transcend time and place. Reaching all the way from its creation by President Lincoln 160 years ago until today, the Medal of Honor is a reminder for us all that people can accomplish seemingly impossible things. We all have the potential within us to be extraordinary.

In this same spirit, the monument we are asking you to provide space for on the National Mall is not a monument to valor or even to the 3,516 individuals who received the Medal of Honor. It is a monument to the enduring values that motivate a citizen soldier to risk their life for those around them, a teacher to talk a student with a gun out of committing a horrible act, a first responder to run into flames instead of away from them, or a young person to stand up for a peer being bullied in the schoolyard.

The Medal of Honor has never been about those who wear it. In fact, we wear it not for ourselves, but for ALL those we served alongside, and most importantly, we wear it for those who never made it home. The Medal of Honor is a symbol; it is the embodiment of the ideals that built our nation. It is an aspiration of our still-forming more perfect union, and it is a reminder of the responsibility all Americans have to serve one another and a greater good.

Fellow Medal of Honor recipient and United States President Teddy Roosevelt once said, "The lives of truest heroism are those in which there are no great deeds to look back upon. It is the little things well done that go to make up a truly successful and good life."

Before Woody Williams created his foundation to honor Gold Star families, most Americans were unfamiliar with the term or the tremendous sacrifice it represents. Today, because of Woody's tireless efforts, there are more than 100 Gold Star Family Memorials around the United States, with 100 more planned. These memorials raise awareness of what has been given for our country.

When President Lincoln created the Medal of Honor in 1861 and awarded the first Medals in 1863, he knew the challenge of keeping our country whole would require incredible sacrifice. He also knew raising the nation's collective gaze to the horizon of things that unite us would be of paramount importance both during the war and after.

There is nothing more uniting than the shared human values represented by the Medal of Honor: courage and sacrifice, commitment and integrity, citizenship, and patriotism.

The connections between President Lincoln and the Medal of Honor stretch far beyond the creation of the Medal itself. The work of preserving and protecting our nation has continued at home and abroad for over a century and a half since the Medal was created, as every generation of Americans has confronted the challenges of our time with the same courage and commitment as Lincoln himself.

The Medal of Honor is the nexus of all this enduring work to keep the American experiment alive. It is an undeniable component of Lincoln's enduring legacy and our American story.

This monument is a way for Lincoln's voice of reason to continue gently whispering into the future, admonishing us to focus on the things that unite us and on our shared values. We have requested this monument be built in proximity to the Lincoln Memorial because it will stand humbly and respectfully as a guard over his legacy and the ideals that held our country together. It will also complete unfinished work.

The original plans for West Potomac Park extended the footprint of the Lincoln Memorial to the edge of the reflecting pool with two additional components. I believe you have each seen a copy of that century-old plan. For reasons unknown, the final pieces were never built. With work presently underway to improve, preserve, and expand the Lincoln Memorial, we believe there is no better time to revisit the original intent and in the most deferential of ways create a lasting physical representation of the bond between Lincoln and the Medal of Honor.

It was 160 years ago last December that Lincoln wrote these words: "Honor to the Soldier and Sailor everywhere who bravely bears his country's cause. Honor to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field, and serves, as best he can, the same cause..."

Over the course of many years working on this project, we have often been asked how it is possible nothing like it already exists. The only reasonable answer is that America needs it now more than ever. We live in seemingly divided times. Yet, I am proud to share this statement with a Congress that in 2021 UNANIMOUSLY approved the National Medal of Honor Monument Act. You proved to the nation there are things upon which we can all agree. There are topics that rise to a level of national importance requiring us to set aside partisan differences and be reminded of our shared values and common purpose.

The Medal of Honor has been awarded in every war and conflict since the Civil War. There are recipients from every branch of the military. The Medal is awarded regardless of race, gender, religion, or any other differentiating factor. And while fewer than 4,000 have had the privilege of wearing it, the Medal is worn for the 40 million citizens who have served in the United States Armed Forces over the past 160 years.

More importantly still, the Medal is presented and worn to remind us all that the work of finding common ground, of service above self, and of being a hero to those around us in everyday life never ends. This monument will be a beacon pointing us all to a purpose above and beyond any divisions of today or tomorrow, reminding us not of valor, but of values: courage and sacrifice, commitment and integrity, citizenship, and patriotism.

Thank you.



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

May 14, 2024

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Senate Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Barrasso
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources
304 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Manchin and Ranking Member Barrasso,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) writes to express its strong support for S. 4216, the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve Establishment Act. By creating the national park and preserve, this important measure would not only bring about Georgia's first national park but also better protect one of the most significant Native American historical and cultural sites and landscapes in the nation.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 5,500 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

The area in question is part of the ancestral home of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. During the thousands of years of their presence in the region, they constructed the seven mounds at the core of the new national park to develop and express their religious, social, and cultural beliefs and practices. A number of other related structures, including trenches, were built near the mounds. These formations constitute some of the best-preserved precontact tribal cultural and historic sites in the United States. Establishing the Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve will ensure that these resources and the landscape that surrounds them, critical to both the Muscogee people's identity as well as the broader public's understanding of our past, survive for generations to come.

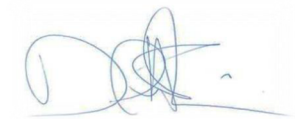
There is another important reason to support this legislation. For far too long, tribal opinions and values went unrecognized by federal and state policymakers when it came to historic preservation, even regarding sites, objects, and landscapes of importance to tribal history and culture. S. 4216 takes a different and beneficial approach, by establishing the Muscogee as co-managers of the park and preserve, thus ensuring that their voices and values are recognized in the preservation of the heart of their tribal homeland.

Finally, the establishment of a new national park and preserve could enhance the economic opportunities of the area. Historic tourism is a lucrative and growing part of the travel industry, and visitors to the

Ocmulgee Mounds National Park and Preserve will not only come to understand and appreciate the story of the Muscogee but also bring with them growth potential for the communities in the area.

The SAA congratulates the Georgia congressional delegation for its years of hard work on this issue and urges the House Natural Resources Committee to pass S. 4216 as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Sandweiss', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel H. Sandweiss, PhD, RPA
President

May 9, 2024

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:
Subcommittee on National Parks Meeting May 15, 2024

From: Whitehall Area Communities Group
Annapolis, MD 21409

Dear Sir or Madam:

As you may know, on July 27, 2023, U.S. Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Sarbanes (both from Maryland) introduced the “Chesapeake National Recreation Area Act” to “establish a new National Park Unit on the Chesapeake Bay”—the CNRA (CNRA Act, S.2620 and H.R. 5045, 118th Cong. 2023). The CNRA is modeled after the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California and is promised to provide more federal resources, help with conservation efforts, foster public access to the Bay and increase tourism.

We are writing to urge you to not support this legislation until the proper due diligence, studies, and communities are included in the planning. To date, there have been no traffic, environmental impact or feasibility studies performed relating to the proposed CNRA or the initial Sites that will be funded by taxpayers. Further, no business plans or details are available regarding specific park plans, economic costs or community impacts. The CNRA planners state that none of this studying or planning will take place until the CNRA Act has been enacted. Only then will the National Park Service (NPS) have the authorization and funds to perform those studies and involve the communities who will be impacted by this legislation the most. This approach is flawed, backwards in its process and simply does not make sense.

There are at least three fundamental flaws with this legislation:

1. There is no study showing this proposed CNRA is “feasible” as a new National Park unit.
2. Similarly, the legislation names a handful of “initial sites” without any due diligence or studies as to their feasibility as National Park sites.
3. The inclusion of the Whitehall Estate in Annapolis, MD as an “initial site” without consideration of the site’s location at an enormous existing traffic choke point at base of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. In addition, the Whitehall estate does not have reasonable public access potential and existing Conservation Easements prevent this property to be used for and this property does not support “recreational uses” as envisioned in the CNRA Act.

There has been no community involvement in this planning. Our communities’ “Whitehall Petition” has nearly 2,000 signatures from citizens who are asking the CNRA sponsors to remove the Whitehall estate from the CNRA Act and involve the communities who will be impacted by this legislation the most in the CNRA and National Park Site(s) planning process going forward. www.change.org/WhitehallPetition

Senator Van Hollen’s CNRA website references a 2004 Study -- “Driven by Senator [Paul] Sarbanes, in 2004 the National Park Service (NPS) released a special resource study which found that the Chesapeake Bay is ‘unquestionably nationally significant and a major part of the nation’s heritage.’” In that 2004 “Final Chesapeake Bay Special Resource Study and Environmental Impact Statement”, the National Park

Service called for future evaluation and study if and when a specific Chesapeake Bay National Park proposal “enjoying demonstrated state and local government, Chesapeake Executive Council and public support is advanced”. The National Park Service also deferred a determination of whether a new National Park unit on the Chesapeake Bay is “feasible” (an NPS requirement) to a future time when such a proposal with site specific details can be studied.

Now in 2024 (20 years later), instead of authorizing the National Park Service to perform the studies and due diligence that should be required in support of legislation of this magnitude, the proponents of the CNRA Act are asking Congress to establish a new National Park unit without projected costs of the CNRA or evaluation and studies of what impacts a “Chesapeake National Recreation Area” would have on the Chesapeake Bay, its’ communities, fisheries and watermen. In addition, this CNRA Act is being introduced as the National Park Service is facing challenges catching up to its growing deferred maintenance backlog of over \$22 billion and criticism of its ability to maintain acceptable conditions at National Park units in its current inventory despite a \$3 billion plus budget.

One of the proposed initial NPS Sites identified in the CNRA Act is the Whitehall estate (located at the now closed Exit 31 on US Route 50) at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in Maryland. The Whitehall estate is located at the end of a narrow historic road in a residential neighborhood. The existing severe traffic issues in this area associated with the Route 50 corridor, Sandy Point State Park and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge would only be worsened by attracting more tourism and is reason alone to not locate a Site here. Summer traffic is regularly a nightmare with up to 10 mile backups in both directions at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. This is not an appropriate place for a National Park Site for many reasons including it lacks sufficient infrastructure, the Whitehall estate requires millions of dollars to restore it to a useable state and no one in the community was notified or consulted in this decision to include it in this CNRA legislation. Despite repeated requests on basic questions — how many potential visitors, how much traffic, what is the cost and impact on our communities, what are the environmental impacts to our creeks and the Bay — not a single answer or estimate has been provided.

The required studies and planning must be performed and broad public support in the Chesapeake Bay region demonstrated before creating a CNRA and collection of National Park Sites on the Chesapeake Bay. The proponents of the CNRA should first be asking Congress to authorize the National Park Service to determine the feasibility of the CNRA, flesh out the specifics, do the planning and the studies, gain community buy-in and define the effects this new National Park unit would have on the Bay and the over 18 million citizens who live and work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Finally, because of the potential widespread impact of this legislation and complicated scope, this CNRA Act should only be considered in regular order, as a standalone measure and not bundled with other legislation.

For these reasons, please oppose this CNRA Act.

Sincerely,

Whitehall Area Communities Group
whitehallareacommunitiesgroup@gmail.com



May 15, 2024

The Honorable Angus S. King, Jr.
Chair
Senate Energy and Natural Resources National Parks Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Daines
Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources National Parks Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources National Parks Subcommittee,

On behalf of our more than one million members and supporters, The Wilderness Society (TWS) writes to express our views on the bills listed below, which are scheduled to be heard by the Senate Energy and Natural Resource National Parks Subcommittee on May 15, 2023.

S. 4209 – Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Access Act

The Wilderness Society supports S.4209, the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument Access Act. TWS joins local leaders, Katahdin Region businesses, outdoor recreation organizations, and the Penobscot Nation in thanking Senator King for introducing this important legislation. S. 4209 would authorize additional access points to KWWNM by giving the National Park Service (NPS) permission to acquire land from willing donors or sellers, either in fees or as an easement to better connect the National Monument to Millinocket.

The town of Millinocket – unlike other gateway communities – doesn't have direct access to the National Monument. Expanding access to KWWNM along the proposed route from Millinocket will bring significant economic benefits to the town. Direct access to the National Monument has provided other gateway towns with a significant economic boost and promises the same for Millinocket. With its expanding hospitality offerings, Millinocket can offer visitors amenities not available elsewhere in the region. With an increase in visitation expected following the opening of Tekakapimək Visitor Contact Station in the monument, it will be important for more circulation in the region and this bill provides for that.

Additionally, the proposed route along the Stacyville, Huber, and Roberts Roads will reduce the drive-time between Baxter State Park and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, shortening the current route by over 20 miles.

S. 4222 – Mojave National Preserve Boundary Adjustment Act

The Wilderness Society supports this proposal to adjust the boundary of the Mojave National Preserve in California to include the land within Castle Mountains National Monument. Castle Mountains National Monument is largely surrounded by and ecologically integrated with the Mojave National Preserve and both units are already managed under the same National Park Service budget. This commonsense consolidation would enable the National Park Service to further streamline planning and management and provide a more cohesive and consistent experience for visitors.

S. 4227 – Joshua Tree National Park Expansion Act

TWS supports this bill which would expand the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park in California by approximately 17,000 acres. This proposed expansion is supported by the findings of the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management's 2016 Eagle Mountain Boundary Study. Recent studies have documented the particular importance of this area for bighorn sheep and desert tortoise populations. The area also contains prehistoric and historic resources that would add to the Nation Park's values. Finally, this expansion would enhance recreational opportunities for park visitors.

S. 4228 – to redesignate the Cottonwood Visitor Center at Joshua Tree National Park as the “Senator Dianne Feinstein Visitor Center”

TWS supports this legislation that would honor the late Senator Dianne Feinstein's tremendous and successful efforts to conserve the California desert, which included the creation of Joshua Tree National Park.

Sincerely,



Lydia Weiss
Senior Director, Government Relations
The Wilderness Society