

## National Heritage Area Testimony

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding a hearing on this legislation. I would also like to thank Ranking Member Christensen for her support in holding this hearing.

HR 5485, The Columbia Pacific National Heritage Area Study Act, is an important piece of legislation to my district and the Pacific Northwest. I have been privileged to work with my colleague David Wu from Oregon in introducing this legislation. In the Senate, the companion legislation has been introduced by Senator Gordon Smith from Oregon and is supported by Washington Senators Murray and Cantwell.

The mouth of the Columbia River is a special place with a rich history. Native American communities have flourished there for thousands of years. It is home to the first American settlement on the Pacific, Astoria. It served as a major trading post for European, American, Chinese, and other nation's ships and earned its nickname, the "Graveyard of the Pacific," from the hundreds of shipwrecks along its dangerous coast. Lewis and Clark ended their westward trek there in 1805. Today, the area is home to the fishing, seafood processing, and timber communities that embody the Pacific Northwest.

This past year marked the conclusion of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemoration, which recognized the important historical contribution of this region to the United States. Congress also recognized the region's importance by passing legislation to establish the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in 2004.

Establishing a National Heritage Area at the mouth of the Columbia is a logical extension of the history of the region and the recognition it has garnered. As you know, National Heritage Areas unite parts of historically and culturally significant areas under a common purpose. In this case, it will help continue the cooperative efforts that the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial helped to create. The Bicentennial Commemoration and new National Park helped bring community interests together to plan in a collaborative fashion. A National Heritage Area will help continue this momentum and ensure the region continues to attract families, outdoorsmen and women, history buffs, and others to enhance its sustainable tourism economy.

Most impressive is that the idea for a National Heritage Area at the mouth of the Columbia came from the local community. Neither Congressman Wu nor I approached the community with this idea, rather, they approached us. We have received letters of support from local governments, local businesses, trade associations, chambers of commerce, ports, and others who have heard about this effort and wholeheartedly endorsed it. A brief sample of support includes the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Office of the Governor of Oregon, the City of Astoria, Shorebank Pacific Bank, Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, the Port of Peninsula, and the Clatsop County Historical Society. We have previously provided these letters of support and others to the Subcommittee and are happy to provide more. I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the work of Chip Jenkins, Superintendent for the Lewis and Clark National Historical Park. Chip has been tireless in his support for the National Heritage Area and his involvement in the local community.

I note that we are joined today by my friend Bob Andrew. Bob is Treasurer of the locally formed 'Destination the Pacific,' a non-profit organization formed to promote the area's cultural and historical significance. Bob is also the owner of a local bakery and a community activist. I look forward to hearing his views on this effort and am happy he could join us today.

Of course, HR 5485 does not establish a new National Heritage Area. What it does do is authorize the National Park Service to conduct a feasibility study to determine if the designation is warranted, who should lead the effort, and the exact boundaries of the potential National Heritage Area. I am optimistic that the National Park Service will be impressed with what the region has to offer, as well as the level of community support for a National Heritage Area. Pending passage of this legislation, I look forward to working with both the Committee and the Park Service to complete the feasibility study and, depending on the outcome, to form a new National Heritage Area at the mouth of the Columbia.

Thank you.