

**Hearing Testimony of Charlotte King, Director of the New Philadelphia Association
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
July 23, 2013**

Thank you Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Charlotte King and I am a Director of the New Philadelphia Association, a grass roots organization dedicated to preserve and commemorate the historic town site of New Philadelphia, Illinois, its residents and founder Frank McWorter. I appreciate your time and the opportunity to address the Subcommittee.

I hope that by the end of my testimony you will agree that the historic town site of New Philadelphia, Illinois qualifies for a place in history as a unit of the nation's cultural crown jewels – the National Park Service. Congressman Aaron Schock's legislation, H.R. 930, would start the process to do just that. It is my hope, and the Association's hope, that this Committee will move forward with Congressman Schock's bill.

New Philadelphia, Illinois, is the first known town in our nation platted and officially registered by an African American.

Born enslaved in South Carolina and moved to Kentucky by his enslaver, town founder Frank McWorter purchased freedom for his wife in 1817, thus ensuring their soon to be born child and future children would be born free. McWorter purchased his own freedom in 1819 and subsequently freed an additional fourteen family members from slavery. McWorter earned the funds for freedom through various money making ventures, including being allowed by his enslaver to keep a portion of his earnings as a hired hand to other pioneers while enslaved in Kentucky and by mining caves for crude niter to produce saltpetre, a component used to manufacture gunpowder – vital for life on the frontier and for the War of 1812.

With his additional earnings, McWorter also acquired a plot of land in Pike County, Illinois and moved there in 1830 with his wife, three free-born children and a son known as Young Frank. The son Young Frank escaped slavery by fleeing to Canada in 1826. Father Frank McWorter exchanged his lucrative saltpetre operation for Young Frank's freedom in 1829. He purchased an additional plot of land and, in 1836, founded New Philadelphia with the intention of applying proceeds earned through lot sales to free children and grandchildren who remained in bondage.

McWorter called the town he founded Philadelphia and sold lots to African and European Americans. An integrated town, New Philadelphia, as it came to be known, was a place where free-born and formerly enslaved African Americans lived alongside European Americans in a region and era of intense racial strife. Archaeological investigations conducted at the site through two 3-year National Science Foundation grants found little difference in the material culture of town lots occupied by African and European Americans.

Situated on fertile prairie land between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers and near major transportation networks, the town grew from a small settlement with three dwellings in the

1840s, and peaked in the 1860s with as many as 160 residents. However, when the Hannibal to Naples Railroad bypassed the town in 1869, New Philadelphia fell into a decline from which it could not recover. Although a few families remained, most of the population moved away by the late 1940s. The once thriving town is now an archaeological site with only a few building foundations visible on the landscape.

New Philadelphia was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005 for its archaeological potential to provide nationally significant information about the lifeways and relationships of African Americans and European Americans in a pioneer setting. In 2009 the town site was designated a National Historic Landmark for its potential to yield information of major scientific importance and to affect archaeological theories, concepts and ideas. New Philadelphia was included in the National Park Service National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program in 2013 for its participation in the movement to resist and end slavery by concealing, harboring and sometimes accompanying runaway African Americans seeking freedom to Canada.

New Philadelphia's designation as a unit of the National Park System will guarantee preservation of the historical significance of this unique place to inspire current and future generations with themes important to all Americans: the struggle for freedom and opportunity. By including New Philadelphia among the national treasures designated units of the National Park Service, of which currently less than 5% are predominantly associated with African-American history, the story of our country would be more complete and accurate and would give recognition to the accomplishments and contributions of African Americans to the development of our country.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you. I would be happy to take any of your questions.