

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks & Public Lands

Witness Statement

STATEMENT OF KATHERINE STEVENSON, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS, COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 940, TO ESTABLISH THE LACKAWANNA VALLEY HERITAGE AREA.

JUNE 10, 1999

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H. R. 940, a bill to establish the Lackawanna Heritage Valley American Heritage Area in northeastern Pennsylvania. The heritage area would be located along the Lackawanna River in the Pennsylvania counties of Lackawanna, Luzerne, Wayne, and Susquehanna.

The Department supports enactment of this legislation, if amended in conformance with this testimony. The Administration, however, objects to the proposed loan authority, which is not consistent with the letter or the spirit of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990.

The bill would establish the Lackawanna Heritage Valley American Heritage Area (Heritage Area) and designate the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (the Authority), an already existing state-enabled regional authority, as the management entity for the Heritage Area. It would require the Authority to enter into a compact with the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Heritage Area's boundaries and to outline the goals and objectives for the Heritage Area. Within three years of enactment of the bill the Authority would submit a management plan to the Secretary of the Interior for approval. The management plan would inventory the Heritage Area's resources, recommend policies for resource management and interpretation, and provide a program for plan implementation. If the management plan is not submitted to the Secretary within the specified time, funding would no longer be authorized. Federal funds provided under the Act would enable the Authority to make loans and grants and to enter into cooperative agreements with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and its political subdivisions, private organizations and persons for carrying out various activities outlined in the bill.

The bill would also authorize not more than \$1,000,000 for any fiscal year, and a total of \$10,000,000 to be appropriated to carry out its purposes, and would require a 50% match for each federal dollar. This bill also contains a sunset provision that would terminate authority for assistance after September 2012. Mr. Chairman, the funding levels and matching requirement proposed in this legislation are consistent with the levels established for the heritage areas in the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996.

The Administration has some concerns regarding this legislation. We object to the authority in section 5(a)(1) of the bill for the management entity to make loans to various entities. No criteria or administrative guidelines are provided, and possible liability is not addressed. Further, such loans would be subject to the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990, which has management requirements that would be a tremendous burden for the management entity. As currently drafted, it is very unclear how the management entity would handle repayment of loans to the federal government if there are defaults. In effect, this bill would give a non-Federal entity authority to act as a Federal credit agency - a precedent with unforeseen implications. The Administration strongly recommends that the authority to make loans be dropped from the bill.

In section 5(c)(8) there is a requirement for the management entity to report on any loans and grants that have been

made with federal funds. To conform with our previous concern regarding loan authority, loans should be dropped from this section of the bill as well.

Section 6(a)(2) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to expend federal funds on non-federally owned property to further the purposes of the Act. It also directs that the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) and the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) shall conduct studies necessary to document the industrial, engineering, building, and architectural history of the region. We oppose this section. We feel that the federal funds authorized under section 8 of this bill to go to the heritage area's management entity are for implementation of their plan so as to address these very issues. Any additional funds from the Secretary would most likely come from our construction fund or the Historic Preservation Fund, neither of which were intended to fund heritage areas nor are appropriations sufficient to cover the activities of heritage areas. Money for any studies to be performed by HABS/HAER should come from a specific heritage area's funding as part of its planning process.

Finally, we recommend changing the name of the heritage area. Over the past several years Congress has established a number of new heritage areas around the country. To be consistent with previous designations and to simplify the name of this heritage area, we recommend that it be named the Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area and that sections 1, 2, and 3 of the bill be amended to reflect this recommendation.

Like other heritage areas established by Congress, this legislation would provide national designation to a place where natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. At the center of the world's most productive anthracite field, the Lackawanna Valley fueled the spectacular growth of American cities and industry for almost one hundred and fifty years. In the process, the landscape and culture of the valley was transformed.

In the Lackawanna Valley the extraction, processing and delivery of coal was combined with the development of a very diverse, integrated industrial complex in an urban setting. Today, a mix of nationally, regionally and locally significant sites, reflecting both industry and the community remain to illustrate an important chapter in United States history. This legislation would further assist in identifying and conserving these diverse resources without adversely impacting the economic growth and stability of the region.

Congressional appropriations have directed the National Park Service to provide funding and technical assistance to the Lackawanna Heritage Valley for almost ten years. The National Park Service played a crucial role in the development of an original action plan for the Lackawanna Heritage Valley that included a statement of national significance for the area. It was that document, approved by the Governor of Pennsylvania, which enabled the area to receive designation as a State Heritage Park in 1991. The Lackawanna Heritage Valley was one of the first areas authorized in the Pennsylvania system that now includes ten state heritage areas.

In 1997 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Bureau of Historic Preservation undertook a study of significance entitled *Anthracite Coal in Pennsylvania: An Industry and a Region*. The study found that "from the perspective of economic, industrial, business, social, ethnic, and labor history the anthracite region and the anthracite industry are clearly of national significance."

Establishment of the Lackawanna Valley as a national heritage area would provide important resources for the ongoing conservation and interpretation of the natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources of this nationally significant region. Continued use of heritage areas by people whose traditions helped to shape the landscape enhances their significance. Federal recognition would encourage the continuation of local interest and pride in their culture and resources.

The Authority has already demonstrated that it uses its money well. It is particularly encouraging that as a heritage area it is getting better and stronger. The Authority is accomplishing its purpose as a management entity by focusing public and private energy and resources on the protection and interpretation of the region's distinctive characteristics and resources. The National Park Service has been a visible and effective partner, but has played a modest overall role. The Authority is the *convener* that has been effective in unifying a variety of diverse interests around a common agenda. The Authority has had many projects that have successfully leveraged and focused non-federal as well as federal funds from agencies other than the National Park Service.

To be successful a heritage area must have broad-based community support to take on the projects outlined in its management plan. There must also be a desire and ability to fund such projects. The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority appears to have broad community support, and the ability to fund projects. It has been working to successfully implement its original action plan and continues yearly to outline an aggressive agenda to work towards achieving goals focused on cultural, historic and environmental conservation, economic development, intergovernmental cooperation, and stewardship of the Lackawanna Valley's resources.

Mr. Chairman, we support this legislation with the key modifications previously discussed. It provides financial and technical assistance to an area of overriding significance in our nation's history. The work that has been accomplished to date and the relationships already established, have given the local community the ability to demonstrate that it values its resources and is willing to work effectively in partnership with federal, state and local governments to preserve them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. This concludes my prepared remarks.

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STATEMENT OF KATHERINE STEVENSON, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1619, A bill to amend the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor Act of 1994 to expand the boundaries of the Corridor.

JUNE 10, 1999

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 1619, a bill to amend the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor Act of 1994 to expand the boundaries of the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor. The bill would also authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical assistance to the management entity, increase authorization of appropriations for the heritage corridor and make technical amendments to the Act to accommodate the expansion.

The Department of the Interior supports enactment of this legislation if amended in conformance with this testimony. The Administration, however, objects to the proposed loan authority, which is not consistent with the letter or intent of the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990.

The Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor in northeastern Connecticut has been called "the last green valley" in the Boston-to-Washington megalopolis. Close to Hartford, Providence and Worcester, but far enough away to avoid the urban sprawl of recent years, this scenic 850-square-mile region remains predominately rural. The Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor was authorized in 1994 in recognition of the valley's distinctive character and to provide assistance to the valley's communities in the preservation of its rural landscape.

H.R. 1619 would expand the existing boundary of Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor to include ten additional towns in Connecticut and Massachusetts. In Connecticut the Town of Union would be added and in Massachusetts the nine towns of Brimfield, Charlton, Dudley, East Brookfield, Holland, Oxford, Southbridge, Sturbridge and Webster would be added. The geographic area of these towns includes much of the headwaters and upper reaches of the Quinebaug River. Additionally these towns include important cultural, natural, and recreational resources such as historic hill towns and mill villages, rolling farmlands and forests, and numerous sites representing distinct periods in American history. These ten communities seek to become active partners in protecting the distinctive heritage of the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley.

We support the expansion of the heritage corridor to include these towns. Their inclusion is consistent with the findings of the original National Park Service study that led to the corridor's creation in 1994. The study identified them as an important part of the overall landscape of the corridor; however, they were not included in the original designation because of a lack of local support in Massachusetts. Their inclusion is important to telling the "whole" story of the region and to developing and instituting a cohesive program of resource protection.

The Massachusetts legislature in 1997 established a special commission, the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Heritage Commission, to evaluate the feasibility of expanding the national heritage corridor into Massachusetts. In 1998 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts contracted with the University of Massachusetts to undertake a study of the region's cultural and natural resources. The Commonwealth's commission and the study both endorse the idea of expanding the heritage corridor to include the additional towns. Additionally, the commission unanimously endorsed the existing

management entity, the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., to be the management entity for the expanded bi-state corridor.

The towns being recommended for inclusion strongly support the legislation and have asked to be included in the heritage area as they now see the value of the work that has gone on in the rest of the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley. The widespread enthusiasm and support in these new communities for the concepts and goals of the heritage corridor has been expressed by local citizens through letters, public meetings, newspaper articles, and surveys. Their support is matched by the enthusiastic support for their inclusion in the corridor by of the corridor's existing towns and management entity, the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc.

The Administration has some concerns regarding this legislation. We object to the authority in section 5 for the management entity to provide loans to various entities. No criteria or administrative guidelines are provided, and possible liability is not addressed. Further, such loans would be subject to the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990, which has management requirements that would be a burden for the management entity. As currently drafted, it is very unclear how the management entity would handle repayment of loans to the federal government if there are defaults. In effect, this bill would give a non-Federal entity authority to act as a Federal credit agency - a precedent with many unforeseen implications. The Administration strongly recommends that the authority to make loans be dropped from the bill.

Section 9 of the bill would also increase the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor's authorization to \$1.5 million per fiscal year not to exceed \$15,000,000 with no sunset clause for appropriations. We support an increase in authorization, but recommend that it be limited to \$1 million annually with a \$10,000,000 cap and that a sunset date for appropriations of at least ten years after date of enactment of these amendments be established. This amendment would conform the area's authorization of appropriations to the same level and length of time as Congress has provided for all heritage areas created in the past few sessions.

Finally, with the expansion of the heritage corridor into Massachusetts, we recommend that the management entity enter into a compact with the Secretary of the Interior, as required of other heritage areas, so as to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the management entity, the State of Connecticut and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor is a well-established heritage area with a demonstrated record of success. Expansion of the corridor at the request of these ten communities is a clear indication of local support and commitment to the heritage corridor. We support the expansion of Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor and believe that this is a prudent expansion, based on shared resources, outstanding recreational and educational opportunities, strong local support, and a proven management capacity.

This concludes my prepared testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or members of the subcommittee may have.

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