

STATEMENT OF JOY BEASLEY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 390, THE MAURICE D. HINCHEY HUDSON RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA ENHANCEMENT ACT.

June 27, 2024

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 390, the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Enhancement Act.

The Department recognizes that there could be potential benefits in expanding the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (NHA), but recommends that the committee defer action on H.R. 390 until such time as the National Park Service (NPS) determines if this proposed expansion is appropriate.

H.R. 390 would expand the boundary of the Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley NHA to include Saratoga and Washington Counties in the State of New York. Both counties are located within the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership, and portions of both counties are within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

The Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area NHA was authorized in 1996, to help preserve, protect, and interpret the history and resources of the Hudson River Valley. The region played an important role in the American Revolution and gave birth to significant developments in American art and architecture. It was important in the iron and textile industries and housed the first women's labor union and secondary school. The NHA includes National Historic Sites, National Historic Landmarks, New York State Parks, and over 1,000 sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Hudson River Valley Greenway (Greenway) is the management entity for the NHA and is comprised of the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council and the Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley.

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 there is significant support for designation within the region.

A 1996 special resource study was conducted of 10 counties along the Hudson River. It found that the area's resources were nationally significant and provided insight into the effect of natural landscapes on settlement, commercial and industrial growth, and into the development of our national political and cultural identity. The study found that the area, which had demonstrated

successful partnership management, qualified as a national heritage area. The NPS recommends that the Greenway submit an addendum to the study that includes a boundary justification for the inclusion of Saratoga and Washington Counties. The addendum would document that the Greenway has reached out to the affected communities and that there is public support for the inclusion of their counties in the boundary of the NHA. Additionally, the addendum will demonstrate that the proposed inclusion of the counties supports the original intent of the NHA.

Once the Greenway completes the study addendum, the NPS will undertake its evaluation. The NPS recommends that the committee defer action on H.R. 390 until the study addendum is completed and the NPS can make a determination on the proposed expansion.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF JOY BEASLEY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 6826, TO DESIGNATE THE VISITOR AND EDUCATION CENTER AT FORT MC HENRY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND HISTORIC SHRINE AS PAUL S. SARBANES VISITOR AND EDUCATION CENTER.

June 27, 2024

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 6826, which would designate the visitor and education center at Fort McHenry National Monument and National Shrine the “Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education Center”.

The visitor and education center is located at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine in Baltimore, Maryland, just outside the fort’s primary historic area, and is accessed from its main entrance on East Fort Avenue. The visitor and education center serves as the first contact station for visitors entering the park and offers an orientation film and exhibits regarding the Battle of Baltimore and the history of the “Star-Spangled Banner.” Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine is also one of the key sites on the Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail.

Senator Sarbanes was a tireless champion of preserving Fort Mc Henry throughout his long career. In so many different ways, he helped to promote the fort’s chief objectives of commemorating the events of the Battle of Baltimore while facilitating public enjoyment and understanding of the historic events and people connected with the site. Over decades, the Senator secured millions of dollars in federal funds to enable critical repairs to the fort’s deteriorating seawall, masonry, and foundations, ensuring the site would be safe to visit for generations to come. He also envisioned Fort McHenry’s inclusion in the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, championing legislation to study and eventually create a National Trail to highlight the British burning of the White House and Capitol in Washington, D.C., the Battle of Baltimore, and the bombing of Fort McHenry, which inspired Francis Scott Key’s composition of “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

Senator Sarbanes also worked to elevate the history of the War of 1812 in the national consciousness by introducing federal legislation to commemorate the war’s bicentennial. Through his service as Vice-Chair of the Maryland War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission from 2007 to 2015, the Senator helped improve and protect relevant historic sites like Fort McHenry and coordinated public and private events to celebrate the anniversary. Finally, in the 2000s, the Senator was integral in securing the funds that enabled the construction of a new visitor and education center at the fort, replacing the old visitor center from the 1960s with an ADA-compliant building that today welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors a year as they learn about one of the defining moments in our nation’s history.

H.R. 6826 would designate the visitor and education center at Fort Mc Henry National Monument and National Shrine as the “Paul S. Sarbanes Visitor and Education 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 H.R. 6826.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF JOY BEASLEY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 6843, A BILL TO EXPAND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA TO INCLUDE LAFOURCHE PARISH, LOUISIANA.

June 27, 2024

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 6843, a bill to expand the boundaries of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to include Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.

The Department recognizes that there could be potential benefits in expanding the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (NHA), but recommends that the committee defer action on H.R. 6843 until such time as the National Park Service (NPS) determines if this proposed expansion is appropriate.

H.R. 6843 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 there is significant support for designation 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 would 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 demonstrate 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 its evaluation. The NPS recommends that the committee defer action on H.R. 6843 until the study addendum is completed and the NPS can make a determination on the proposed expansion.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF JOY BEASLEY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 8206, TO ENSURE THAT BIG CYPRESS NATIONAL PRESERVE MAY NOT BE DESIGNATED AS WILDERNESS OR AS A COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL WILDERNESS PRESERVATION SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

June 27, 2024

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 8206, a bill to ensure that Big Cypress National Preserve may not be designated as wilderness or a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System, and for other purposes.

The Department opposes H.R. 8206.

H.R. 8206 would prohibit Big Cypress National Preserve (Preserve) from being designated as wilderness or a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The bill appears to be intended to preempt any proposal from the Administration, or any Congressional decision, to enact a wilderness designation within the Preserve. If Congress does not want to designate wilderness in the Preserve, it can achieve that goal by not acting on any legislation designating wilderness within the Preserve, as only Congress can designate wilderness. Additionally, the National Park Service has not recommended wilderness in this area. Therefore, this legislation is unnecessary.

The historical establishment of the Preserve remains a remarkable example of unity and compromise among diverse stakeholders, including local conservationists, government representatives, outdoor recreationists, environmental advocates, and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians and Seminole Tribe of Florida. In the 1960s, these groups united to protect the Big Cypress Swamp from a major jetport development that posed a threat to the area's invaluable natural and cultural assets. Their collective efforts led to the establishment of the Preserve, our nation's first national preserve, in 1974. The law designating the Preserve as a unit of the National Park System ensured protection of these resources while simultaneously providing diverse public land uses, including hunting, fishing, off road vehicle use, private camp ownership, and traditional use and occupancy rights for Native American Tribes. The NPS remains committed to working with stakeholders, local and state officials, and Tribes—the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians and the Seminole Tribe of Florida—on all issues of concern within the Preserve.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF JOY BEASLEY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 8219, 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.

June 27, 2024

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 8219, 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 H.R. 8219 with amendments.

H.R. 8219 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 Tiffany, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.