

**STATEMENT OF JANET SNYDER MATTHEWS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR
FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND
NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 429, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE
UPPER HOUSATONIC VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA IN THE
STATE OF CONNECTICUT AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF
MASSACHUSETTS.**

March 15, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department's views on S. 429, a bill to establish the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area in the State of Connecticut and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

While a feasibility study has found the Upper Housatonic Valley area appropriate for designation, we recommend that the Committee defer action on S. 429 until program legislation is enacted that establishes guidelines and a process for designation of national heritage areas. Last year, the Administration sent to Congress a legislative proposal to establish such guidelines and a process for designation. This year, the Administration is working on a similar legislative proposal, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on this very important issue. Absent enactment of such program legislation establishing guidelines and a process for designation, we will look at a number of options, including consideration of potential offsets within the National Heritage Area Grants Program.

Another reason we are recommending deferral is that given current fiscal constraints, any discussion of particular national heritage areas should be consistent with the President's budget. Funding in the FY 2006 President's Budget for the National Heritage Area program combined with funding from the First Lady's Preserve America program, the Save America's Treasures program, and historic preservation grants will go a long way toward supporting local efforts to preserve cultural, historical, natural, and recreational resources that reflect our nation's heritage.

S. 429 would establish the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, encompassing 29 communities in western Massachusetts and northwestern Connecticut, extending 60 miles through the watershed of the upper Housatonic River, from Kent, Connecticut to Lanesboro, Massachusetts. The bill would also identify the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, Inc. as the management entity for the national heritage area.

The Upper Housatonic Valley, sometimes referred to as "the fourteenth colony" is a singular geographical and cultural region that is characterized by significant national contributions in literature, art, music, and architectural achievements; its iron, paper, and electrical equipment industries; and scenic beautification and environmental conservation efforts. The region contains five National Historic Landmarks including the homes of W.E.B. Dubois, Edith Wharton and Herman Melville. Over 120 sites and 18 historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places dot the landscape. It was home to Nathaniel Hawthorne, painters Norman Rockwell and Jasper Johns, and sculptor Daniel

Chester French, who sculpted the “Seated Lincoln” at the Lincoln Memorial. Among the Upper Housatonic Valley’s early iron masters was Ethan Allen, the hero of Fort Ticonderoga and an early mercantile activist. Important events related to the Revolutionary War, Shays’ Rebellion, and early civil rights activism also took place in the area. The region’s performing arts centers—the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s summer home at Tanglewood, Music Mountain, Norfolk Chamber Music Festival, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Berkshire Theatre Festival, and Shakespeare & Company—are internationally known.

The Upper Housatonic Valley contains a myriad of natural resources and has been the beneficiary of a long history of innovative environmental conservation initiatives that have been influential across the country. These include pioneering state parks and private nature preserves and the first village improvement society in America, the Laurel Hill Association, of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. Four National Natural Landmarks including unique bogs and an old growth forest have been designated here. The Appalachian National Scenic Trail follows the length of the Upper Housatonic Valley.

The region was the site of pioneering endeavors in the iron, paper, and electrical generation industries. The iron industry, which was responsible for manufacturing 75% of the cannons used by the Continental Army during the American Revolution, was active from 1735 until 1923. The first mill in America to make paper from wood pulp was located in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Tied together by the Housatonic River, the region offers extensive opportunities for resource preservation, education, and heritage tourism. The heritage area designation would link together several existing historic sites, such as protected iron smelting sites, to strengthen the understanding of the regional historical significance of the valley. The area also reflects the rich traditions and folkways of the Mohican Indians, Shakers, Yankee farmers, African Americans, and European immigrant groups. The educational and preservation value of the valley to residents was a major point of public support for designation.

There is extensive citizen involvement in heritage activities in the Upper Housatonic Valley involving a broad array of municipalities, private organizations, and individuals. The non-profit organization, Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, Inc., has a broad-based membership and a strong track record in organizing heritage initiatives. Comments at public meetings, and those received as the draft feasibility study concluded, indicate strong public support for national heritage area designation.

The Department's Feasibility Study for the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area found that the Upper Housatonic Valley meets the Department's ten interim criteria for designation of a national heritage area. The Upper Housatonic Valley is distinctive for having a landscape that includes a blend of industrial innovations, environmental conservation initiatives, and cultural achievements of national significance.

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