

**STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE TOOTHMAN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING S. 1339 A BILL TO REAUTHORIZE THE OHIO & ERIE NATIONAL HERITAGE CANALWAY.**

**July 31, 2013**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1339, a bill to reauthorize the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway.

The Department recognizes the important work of the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway to preserve heritage resources in northeast Ohio from Cleveland to New Philadelphia and its role in linking Cuyahoga Valley National Park to the residents of Cleveland, Akron, and other communities through the preservation and maintenance of the canal's towpath that runs through the heart of the park. We recommend that S. 1339 be amended to authorize an extension for heritage area program funding until we have completed an evaluation and report on the accomplishments of the area and the future role of the National Park Service; and until national heritage area program legislation is enacted that standardizes timeframes and funding for designated national heritage areas. Consistent with congressional directives in the FY 2009 and FY 2010 Interior Appropriations Acts, the Administration proposed, in the FY 2014 budget, focusing most national heritage area grants on recently authorized areas and reducing and/or phasing out funds to well-established recipients to encourage self-sufficiency. The Department would like to work with Congress to determine the future federal role when national heritage areas reach the end of their authorized eligibility for heritage program funding. We recommend that Congress enact national heritage legislation during this Congress.

There are currently 49 designated national heritage areas, yet there is no authority in law that guides the designation and administration of these areas. Program legislation would provide a much-needed framework for evaluating proposed national heritage areas, offering guidelines for successful planning and management, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties, and standardizing timeframes and funding for designated areas.

S. 1339, as introduced, would extend the authorization of federal funding for the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway for an additional 9 years. The Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway, originally called the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, was established in 1996 by Public Law 104-333. This national heritage area includes the counties of Cuyahoga, Summit, Stark, and Tuscarawas in northeast Ohio. The region extends from Lake Erie along the Erie Canal through Cleveland to New Philadelphia.

The mission of this national heritage area is to preserve and interpret and celebrate the rails, trails, landscapes, towns and sites that grew up along the first 100 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canalway that helped Ohio and our nation grow. This is accomplished through a voluntary

partnership with communities and citizens, and local, state, and federal agencies emphasizing public access, economic development, regional planning, and interpretive programs.

Public Law 104-333 designated the Ohio & Erie Canal Association as the management entity for the national heritage area. The heritage area management entity facilitates public private partnerships for the preservation of heritage resources and works closely with National Park Service staff at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The national heritage area's work focuses on regional initiatives for heritage programming, interpretation and education, preservation and resource stewardship, heritage development and infrastructure, and planning and design, all linking the canal communities together through the canal's towpath trail.

During its 16 years of existence, the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway has a significant record of achievement and, with government funding assistance since its establishment, has shown significant success in working with partners and the federal government to preserve, interpret, and promote the significant resources of the local communities along the Ohio & Erie Canalway. In total, the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway has received almost \$13.3 million in federal funding, and every federal dollar has been matched at least once with non-federal funds.

The Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway has taken the lead on initiatives such as the development of 73 miles of the multi-use recreational Towpath Trail from Cleveland to New Philadelphia, Ohio, that is used by thousands of visitors each year. The management entity has worked tirelessly to connect sites, communities and parklands, resulting in the creation of thousands of new national park and towpath trail users. They continue to help communities and trail groups establish a system of county trails and green spaces, with over 400 miles of trails that link cultural and historic sites, parks, open spaces, and community centers as well as providing public access to the Ohio & Erie Canalway.

We recommend two technical amendments to the long title of the bill to make it clear that the bill would extend the authorization for federal funding for the national heritage area instead of reauthorizing the national heritage area and to correct the name of the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway. While the Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway faces a sunset for its federal funding, its national heritage area designation will not sunset.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the committee may have.