



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Barrasso:

Pursuant to Public Law 110-229, I am pleased to transmit the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA) Evaluation Findings (Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged PennPraxis' Urban Heritage Project at the University of Pennsylvania's Stuart Weitzman School of Design to independently assess the progress, analyze the investments, and identify the critical components for sustainability of the national heritage area. Based on the findings of the Evaluation, the NPS recommends a future role with NFNHA. The NPS will continue to work with NFNHA to implement business, fundraising, and financial resource plans and continue to form networks of operational and financial partnerships to further sustainability of NFNHA operations.

In 2008, Congress designated the NFNHA in Public Law 110-229 to preserve, protect, and promote the communities, landscapes, and cultural resources along a 13-mile corridor along the Niagara River in New York and established a federal commission, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission (the Commission). The superintendent of Fort Stanwix National Monument served as the NPS liaison to the Commission. The NPS liaison aided in seating the Commission as well as supporting the development of a management plan for NFNHA. In 2013, the Commission created the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, Inc. (NFNHAI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to serve as the coordinating entity to meet the purposes, goals, and objectives of the area's legislation and approved management plan.

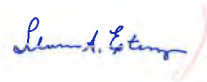
The Evaluation found that the Commission and NFNHAI's partnership with Niagara University provided organizational support which allowed the NFNHAI to create a substantial partnership network. This network enables regional collaboration such as development of the Discover Niagara Shuttle (launched in 2016, it secured sustainable funding in 2019) and the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center. NFNHAI is an adaptable organization, positioned to preserve, protect, and promote the area's heritage through development, interpretation, and community building efforts. The NFNHAI increased regional cooperation, strengthened heritage infrastructure, broadened interpretation of the area's history, preserved and promoted the region's cultural resources, and invested in economic opportunities.

The Evaluation determined that the Commission and the NFNHAI addressed the legislated purposes and met the management plan goals with the support of the federal resources provided. From 2009 to 2020, the investments made in the NFNHA totaled more than \$11 million. During this period, the NFNHA received \$3,054,833 in NPS Heritage Partnership Program funds. The NFNHA secured \$8.2 million in matching funds, nearly three times the required 50 percent match.

The Evaluation found that NFNHAI has the governance, leadership, staff, and partnerships in place to lead a sustainable NHA. However, both the NHA designation and the NPS Heritage Partnership Program funding are essential to the sustainability of the NFNHA. Federal funding provided flexibility, consistent financial support, and the ability to leverage other resources, while the NHA designation elevated the significance of the region, enabling local stakeholders to work together. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exists for NPS involvement, including providing financial and technical assistance, training, guidance on planning; partnering with national parks; or consulting on preservation and conservation projects.

A similar letter is being sent to the Honorable Joe Manchin III, Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources United States House of Representatives; and the Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives.

Sincerely,



Date: 2022.05.18  
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Shannon Estenoz  
Assistant Secretary  
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: Senator Charles Schumer  
Senator Kristen E. Gillibrand  
Representative Brian Higgins  
Representative Chris Jacobs



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva  
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva:

Pursuant to Public Law 110-229, I am pleased to transmit the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA) Evaluation Findings (Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged PennPraxis' Urban Heritage Project at the University of Pennsylvania's Stuart Weitzman School of Design to independently assess the progress, analyze the investments, and identify the critical components for sustainability of the national heritage area. Based on the findings of the Evaluation, the NPS recommends a future role with NFNHA. The NPS will continue to work with NFNHA to implement business, fundraising, and financial resource plans and continue to form networks of operational and financial partnerships to further sustainability of NFNHA operations.

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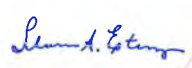
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A similar letter is being sent to the Honorable Joe Manchin III, Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; the Honorable John Barrasso, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; and the Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives.

Sincerely,



Date: 2022.05.18  
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Shannon Estenoz  
Assistant Secretary  
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

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Senator Kristen E. Gillibrand  
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Honorable Joe Manchin III  
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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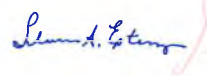
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Shannon Estenoz  
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The Honorable Bruce Westerman  
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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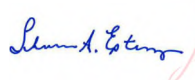
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Shannon Estenoz  
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