



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, NW

Washington, DC 20240

H36(2200)

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

Dear Representative Grijalva:

Pursuant to Public Law 110-229, I am pleased to transmit the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area (NHA) Evaluation Findings. The National Park Service (NPS) engaged the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University to assess the progress, analyze investments, and identify critical components for sustainability of the NHA. Based on the findings of this Evaluation, the NPS recommends a continued role with the NHA.

In 2008, Congress designated the Abraham Lincoln NHA (ALNHA) in Public Law 110-229 and named The Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition (LFL), an independent non-profit organization, as the local coordinating entity. ALNHA is the only NHA named for and centered on a person, in particular a United States President, and is focused on the 30 years Abraham Lincoln lived in central Illinois, raising his family and pursuing his passion for the law and politics. The ALNHA is one of the largest NHAs in the country, encompassing 43 counties in central Illinois. The evaluation of this NHA started prior to the passing of recent legislation and the NPS, NHA, and evaluators agreed to continue the project to completion.

Over the past 15 years, the LFL partnership met the expectations of its authorizing legislation, by creating a strong management framework and achieving its management plan goals. The ALNHA Partnership is well positioned to continue to preserve, protect, and promote the region's heritage through major education, tourism, and conservation/preservation efforts listed below.

- With more than 1.5 million participants, the LFL interpretation, living history, and education events allow the life and times of Abraham Lincoln to come alive for the public and its audience, by telling a “classic American story” of Abraham Lincoln.
- The LEAD Academy program is a unique partnership between the NPS Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Union Pacific, and Illinois College (previously)/Southern Illinois University (currently).
- LFL's waysides represent one of its earliest and largest program efforts with more than 200 waysides installed in 55 communities across the ALNHA.
- LFL develops and distributes a physical and digital Visitor Guide annually that is free to the public. This Visitor Guide provides valuable information about sites, attractions, and communities across the ALNHA.

Both the NHA designation and the NPS Heritage Partnership Program funding are essential to the sustainability of the ALNHA Partnership. Federal funding provided flexibility, consistent funds, and the ability to leverage other resources, while the NHA designation elevated the significance of the region.

As per 54 USC 120104(c), the NPS recommends that Federal funding for ALNHA Partnership be continued without reduction. If Federal funding is reduced or eliminated, local efforts to preserve, protect, and promote the region's heritage through major education, tourism, and conservation/preservation may cease or be reduced. Federal funding is essential for sustaining the NHA's organizational capacity.

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, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

Charles F. Sams III  
Director, National Park Service

Enclosure

cc: Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL)  
Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)  
Representative Robin Kelly (D-IL-2)  
Representative Mike Bost (R-IL-12)  
Representative Nikki Budzinski (D-IL-13)  
Representative Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14)  
Representative Mary Miller (R-IL-15)  
Representative Darin LaHood (R-IL-16)  
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