



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

**OCT 06 2016**

H36(2256)

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

Pursuant to Public Law 113-291, I am pleased to transmit the MotorCities National Heritage Area (MCNHA) Evaluation Findings (Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged Westat as the evaluator 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 the MCNHA. The NPS will work with MCNHA to implement business, fundraising, and financial resource development plans and continue to form networks of operational and financial partnerships to further long-term sustainability of MCNHA operations.

In 1998, Congress designated the Automobile National Heritage Area, now the MotorCities National Heritage Area, with nearly 260 municipalities and towns in Michigan, including Detroit, Dearborn, Flint, Lansing, Jackson, and Pontiac. The area contributed to development of the nation's transportation infrastructure and skilled labor force, and it was the center of the automobile industry. The MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership, Inc. (MCNHA Partnership) is the coordinating entity in Detroit, with representatives from Federal, State, local governments, tourist agencies, preservation and environmental groups, cultural organizations, and foundations.

The Evaluation determined that from 2000-2013 the MCNHA addressed its legislated purposes. It completed many but not all of the goals in the management plan with the support of the federal resources provided. Both the NPS funding and the National Heritage Area designation are of value to the MCNHA. The MCNHA Partnership met the 50% match requirements with a total of \$7.5 million to match \$6.7 million in NPS Heritage Partnership Program funding, for a total of \$15 million. The matching funds came from foundations and private organizations, income, and in-kind donations. It received \$339,309 in other Federal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of Transportation.

The MCNHA Partnership work has focused on the following four strategies, with funding allocated fairly evenly between them: Education/Interpretation, Tourism, Preservation, Conservation and Revitalization. Education/Interpretation items include documentaries and exhibits. Tourism funding supports museums, events such as Autopalooza, and the recently-completed wayside exhibit program to highlight 250 sites across the NHA. Historic preservation and revitalization projects include restoring the Ford industry mills that were slated for demolition. Current projects include restorations of the Ford Piquette Avenue Plant, the Ypsilanti Michigan Firehouse Museum, the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum and other landmarks such as the Flint Arch that contribute to community revitalization.

The work of MCNHA supports the mission of the NPS. The Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program staff were involved in planning for MCNHA, served on the advisory panel, and assisted with the Environmental Assessment and interpretive plan. In 2002, the NPS regional coordinator for heritage areas became the liaison. The superintendent of River Raisin Battlefield Park has been a partner since the park opened in 2011, and has participated in activities, such as the bi-centennial commemoration of the Battle of 1812.

The MCNHA Partnership experienced financial challenges in the past. Support of the United Auto Workers Union and the Big Three Automobile Manufacturers provided a strong financial base from 1998-2004. Subsequent changes in leadership and economic disruption in the industry and region affected the ability of the MCNHA to complete projects and manage its finances. Starting in 2009, the Board and its new Executive Director worked to pay debts incurred in preceding years, eventually reestablishing solvency. The Evaluation found that MCNHA Partnership currently has the governance and is staffed appropriately to operate a sustainable organization. Leadership is implementing a strategic plan that proposes activities that could create a financial foundation, although NPS funds currently provide the base of funding.

The MotorCities National Heritage Area is fulfilling its legislative mandate. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exists for NPS involvement in supporting the area, including providing financial and technical assistance, training, operational guidance and sustainability planning, partnering with national parks, or consulting on preservation and conservation.

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives; and the Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Bean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Bean  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure



# United States Department of the Interior

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OCT 06 2016

H36(2257)

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Minority Member,  
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cantwell:

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Michael Bean  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
The Honorable Gary Peters  
The Honorable Justin Amash  
The Honorable Mike Bishop  
The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.  
The Honorable Debbie Dingell  
The Honorable Dan Kildee  
The Honorable Brenda Lawrence  
The Honorable Sander M. Levin  
The Honorable Candice S. Miller  
The Honorable Dave Trott  
The Honorable Tim Walberg



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H36(2257)

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman  
Committee on Natural Resources  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop:

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The Honorable Tim Walberg





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Committee on Natural Resources  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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