



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

H30(2200)

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
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 Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (NHA) Evaluation Findings. The National Park Service (NPS) engaged PennPraxis' Urban Heritage Project at the University of Pennsylvania's Stuart Weitzman School of Design 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 NHA in Public Law 110-229 to preserve, protect, and promote the communities, landscapes, and cultural resources along the 175-mile region generally following the Route 15 corridor and surrounding areas from Adams County, Pennsylvania, through Maryland to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, through Virginia and ending in Albemarle County, Virginia. Congress named the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership (JTHG Partnership), a Virginia non-profit organization founded in 2005, as the local coordinating entity for the NHA. Public Law 110-229 also mandated the development of a management plan and evaluation of the NHA.

In January 2023, Congress extended the funding authorization of the NHA through September 30, 2037, via the NHA Act (Public Law 117-339). The evaluation of this NHA started prior to the passing of that legislation and the NPS, NHA, and evaluators agreed to continue the project to completion.

Over the past 15 years, the JTHG Partnership met the expectations of its authorizing legislation, by creating a strong management framework and achieving its management plan goals. The JTHG 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.

- The partner network views the JTHG Partnership as a connective tissue, facilitating larger conversations around regional heritage. This "connective tissue" effect is shown through the NHA's many educational programs, including its signature program, the National History Academy, launched in 2018.
- From 2008-2021, the investments made in the NHA totaled more than \$15 million dollars. During this period, the NHA received \$3,228,205 in NPS Heritage Partnership Program funds and secured \$13 million in matching funds, approximately four times the required 50 percent match.


- The JTHG Partnership has the governance, leadership, staff, and partnerships in place to lead a sustainable NHA, mainly through the partnership model and funding sources afforded by the National History Academy.

Both the NHA designation and the NPS Heritage Partnership Program funding are essential to the sustainability of the JTHG Partnership. Federal funding provided flexibility, consistent funds, and the ability to leverage other resources, while the NHA designation elevated the significance of the region, enabling local stakeholders, like Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, to work together and the National History Academy to gain credence on a national scale.

As per 54 USC 120104(c), the NPS recommends that Federal funding for the JTHG 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. The National History Academy may continue if Federal funding is reduced or ceases. At this time, we do not recommend reduction or elimination of Federal funding.

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,

 Date: 2024.05.31
15:07:35 -04'00'

Charles F. Sams III
Director, National Park Service

Enclosure

cc: Senator Bob Casey, Jr. (D-PA)
Senator John Fetterman (D-PA)
Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)
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Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)
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