



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

APR 12 2013

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to Public Law 110-229, I am pleased to transmit the *Evaluation of the Essex National Heritage Area Commission Findings Document* (Essex Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged the Center for Park Management to complete the Essex Evaluation in order 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 Essex Evaluation, and as required by Section 462(c) of Public Law 110-229, the NPS recommends a future role with Essex National Heritage Area.

Essex National Heritage Area is in eastern Massachusetts and received designation in 1996 due to three nationally important American themes: early settlement, maritime history, and the early industrial era. The cultural landscape that defines Essex National Heritage Area is rich in man-made resources, with 26 national historic landmarks, 9,968 sites on the National Register of Historic Places, 73 National Register Historic Districts, one national wildlife refuge, and 2 national parks (Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site).

Essex National Heritage Commission (ENHC) is the local entity that manages the federal funding and coordinates the work within the heritage area. Partnership is an essential component of ENHC's work, including developing the relationship with the national parks. ENHC's work centers on regional initiatives for interpretation and education, preservation and resource stewardship, heritage development and infrastructure, and planning and design. The NPS provides assistance to ENHC through the Northeast Regional Office in Philadelphia.

The work of ENHC contributes to the mission of the NPS. ENHC enhances the capacity of Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Ironworks National Historic Site to interpret their resources and teach the public including providing jobs for youth in the community. ENHC partnered with Salem Maritime and Saugus Iron Works on the development of educational curricula, coordination of special events and resource preservation. Given the ENHC non-profit

status and strong connections to community leaders, ENHC is often able to procure financial and other types of resources to support key NPS initiatives.

The Essex Evaluation found that ENHC successfully engages citizens who work in heritage and conservation agencies all across the region. Through its comprehensive network of partners, ENHC sponsors public events and theme-related educational programs to promote heritage awareness. The Community Survey, conducted as part of the Essex Evaluation, found respondents were either very or extremely satisfied with ENHC events, with 98 percent reporting they would attend ENHC events in the future.

ENHC's work demonstrates the ability to successfully provide formal technical assistance and work collaboratively to assist with long-term resource protection. Heritage area signage is recognized throughout the region and appears to be unifying the area. ENHC has emerged as a coordinating entity that brings technical expertise, stakeholders, and partners together to create successful trail coalitions, coordinating work across boundaries.

Since first receiving funding in 1998, ENHC more than doubled the requirement for annual matching contributions. As noted in the enclosed findings document, between 1998 and 2008 ENHC received \$9,327,437 in federal funds which were matched with \$19,702,891 from non-federal sources. ENHC's cumulative federal assistance funding remains below the authorized amount of \$15 million.

The Essex Evaluation illustrates a minimal federal investment can be creatively leveraged to benefit a community, protect heritage resources, and double the federal dollar. The mutually beneficial relationship between ENHC and the NPS starts with and relies on the authorizing legislation. ENHC has played a key role in educating residents and visitors, encouraging communities to work together and cultivating the regional identity of Essex National Heritage Area.

Losing federal assistance would have a significant negative impact on the resources, partners, and the NPS which have all considerably benefited from the work of ENHC. The Essex Evaluation states that the impact on ENHC partners would be dire: "in the absence of ENHC's financial and technical assistance, these groups would face a sudden deterioration in capacity with some having to close their doors." The Essex Evaluation finds that no other organization has the mission to preserve and protect all of the region's nationally significant resources and that without ENHC the broad collaboration between the 34 towns and cities would dramatically decrease.

ENHC is fulfilling its legislative mandate. Based on the positive results of the Essex Evaluation, the NPS recommends a future role with the Essex National Heritage Area. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exists for NPS involvement in supporting the heritage area. The NPS options for future involvement may include: providing financial and technical assistance, coordinating training, providing operational guidance, partnering with national parks for events and programming, consulting on preservation and conservation, and consulting on area plans and projects

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives; and the Honorable Edward Markey, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Jacobson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rachel Jacobson
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
The Honorable William Cowan
The Honorable Niki Tsongas
The Honorable John Tierney



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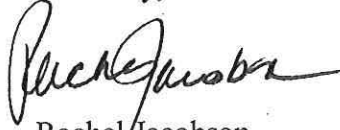
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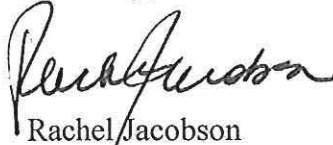
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