



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

OCT 06 2016

H36(2257)

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 Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area 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 Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area (LVNHA). The NPS will work with the LVNHA 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 the LVNHA operations.

In 2000, Congress designated the LVNHA along the Lackawanna River watershed, including Lackawanna County, and parts of Luzerne, Susquehanna, and Wayne Counties. The legislation noted anthracite coal mining, iron-making, textiles, rail transportation industries, as well as the development of labor unions as nationally significant. The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA), a municipal authority in Scranton, Pennsylvania, is the coordinating entity and also manages the state heritage area designated in 1991. In 2008, Heritage Valley Partners was formed as a non-profit fundraising arm to improve sustainability.

The Evaluation determined that the LHVA addressed the legislated purposes and goals outlined in the management plan with the support of the federal resources provided. The LHVA successfully met the 50 percent federal funding match requirements from 2000 to 2014, with a total of over \$12.8 million in nonfederal funds matched to \$7.1 million in NPS Heritage Partnership Program dollars. Funds from the State, the County, and other partners were used as matching funds. The LHVA received \$3.9 million in other Federal funds, mostly from the Federal Highway Administration. From 2000-2014, a total of \$30.1 million in financial resources were directed toward LVNHA activities.

The Evaluation concludes that the LHVA was fiscally responsible in expending funds. The largest investments by the LHVA were in parks and restoration (72 percent of funding), including the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail (LRHT) and the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Riverfront Greenway. LRHT is the LHVA's signature project, forming part of 70-mile trail system that connects LHV communities and fosters economic development. Community development through grantmaking and other means accounted for 13 percent of funding. Historic preservation, cultural conservation, and public engagement accounted for 11 percent of funds. Finally, the LHVA utilized 4 percent of funding toward education, including exhibits and grants reaching 169,000-283,000 students annually from 2007 to 2012.

The work of the LVNHA contributes to the mission of the NPS, with Steamtown National Historic Site (Steamtown) as a key partner. The partnership received a National Trust/Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Award for Federal Partnerships in Historic Preservation in 2004. The LHVA provides Steamtown with visibility in the community, funding, and networking opportunities. Steamtown provides the LHVA with critical technical assistance and interpretation on signs.

The Evaluation found that LVNHA has the governance and partnerships to operate a sustainable organization. However, while it generates funds from non-federal sources, the NHA designation and NPS funding are critical to sustainability. The Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area is fulfilling its legislative mandate. 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.

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,



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

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Bob Casey
The Honorable Patrick J. Toomey
The Honorable Matt Cartwright
The Honorable Tom Marino



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The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Grijalva:

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