



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 *Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area Findings Document* (Silos and Smokestacks Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged the Center for Park Management as the consultant and Westat as the evaluator to independently assess the progress, analyze the investments, and identify the critical components for sustainability of this National Heritage Area located in Iowa. Based on the findings of the Silos and Smokestacks Evaluation, and as required by Section 462(c) of Public Law 110-229, the NPS recommends a future role with the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area.

The Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area (SSNHA) was created by legislation passed by Congress in 1996, which authorized America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership to preserve the nationally important story of American agricultural heritage in northeastern Iowa. The SSNHA spans 37 counties, a total of 20,000 square miles, and works with 108 partner sites and 2 national parks (Herbert Hoover National Historic Site and Effigy Mounds National Monument). The SSNHA coordinating entity manages the federal funding and coordinates work within the heritage area. NPS provides assistance to the SSNHA through the Midwest Regional Office in Omaha.

The work of the SSNHA contributes to the mission of the NPS. The NPS has been a partner and mentor in helping the SSNHA deliver the technical assistance required to achieve its mission. Findings in the evaluation revealed that SSNHA partners and the communities in which these sites are located benefit from the relationship with the NPS and that a minimal federal investment can be creatively leveraged to benefit a community, protect heritage resources, and more than double the federal dollar. As noted in the attached evaluation findings document, between 1998 and 2009 SSNHA received \$6,557,000 in NPS federal assistance funding which was matched with \$7,705,301 from non-federal sources, exceeding the requirement for annual matching contributions. The SSNHA's cumulative NPS federal assistance funding remains below the authorized amount of \$15 million.

The SSNHA coordinating entity has built an extensive network of sites and communities to develop, interpret, and preserve the region's agricultural heritage. The coordinating entity provides grants, technical assistance, educational assistance, capacity-building and awareness-building activities to teach people about American agriculture, agribusiness, farm life, and rural communities — past and present. Educational programs that reach youth are a key component of its work. The SSNHA coordinating entity operates Camp Silos, an educational website for teachers and students that receives nearly 500,000 annual visits.

The SSNHA coordinating entity has built the local capacity of sites and communities in the heritage area to preserve and develop heritage resources. The coordinating entity is cited as the catalyst of community revitalization and its programs demonstrate regional buy-in that, in turn, helps local communities leverage further investment from other funders. It provides valuable seed money to help communities launch specific projects for heritage development. Partner representatives, especially those in rural communities with distressed economies, highlighted the value of pairing technical assistance with grants and stated that coordinating entity consultations helped them create a more complete visitor experience.

Losing federal assistance would have a significant negative impact on the ability of the area to carry out its legislative purpose. The Silos and Smokestacks Evaluation finds that no other organization has the capacity to assist all of the partnership sites within the 37 counties.

The SSNHA is fulfilling its legislative mandate. Based on the favorable findings of the Silos and Smokestacks Evaluation, the NPS recommends a future role with the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exists for continuing the NPS role in supporting the heritage area. Options for future NPS 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,



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

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Charles Grassley

The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Bruce Braley
The Honorable Dave Loebsack
The Honorable Tom Latham
The Honorable Steve King



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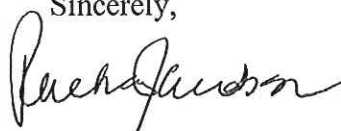
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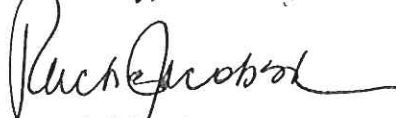
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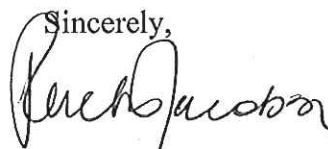
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