

STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE TOOTHMAN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING S. 1186, A BILL TO REAUTHORIZE THE ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA.

July 31, 2013

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1186, a bill to reauthorize the Essex National Heritage Area.

The Department recognizes the important work of the Essex National Heritage Area to preserve heritage resources in Essex County, Massachusetts. We recommend that S. 1186 be amended to authorize an extension for heritage area program funding until Congress has had time to consider the completed evaluation and report on the accomplishments of the area and the future role of the National Park Service that was recently transmitted to Congress during this past month; and until heritage area program legislation is enacted that standardizes timeframes and funding for designated national heritage areas. Consistent with congressional directives in the 2009 and 2010 Interior Appropriations Acts, the Administration proposed, in the FY 2014 budget, focusing most national heritage area grants on recently authorized areas. The Department would like to work with Congress to determine the future federal role when heritage areas reach the end of their authorized eligibility for heritage program funding. We recommend that Congress enact national heritage legislation during this Congress.

There are currently 49 designated national heritage areas, yet there is no authority in law that guides the designation and administration of these areas. Program legislation would provide a much-needed framework for evaluating proposed national heritage areas, offering guidelines for successful planning and management, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties, and standardizing timeframes and funding for designated areas.

Essex National Heritage Area was established in 1996 by Public Law 103-333. This national heritage area was established to recognize, preserve, promote, and interpret the historic, cultural, and natural resources of the North Shore and lower Merrimack River valley in Essex County, Massachusetts. The early settlement history, maritime history, and the imprint of the early industrial era on the landscape, in particular, were considered to be nationally distinctive and met the criteria for national heritage area designation. Essex National Heritage Area preserves and interprets a rich cultural landscape that includes historic homes, small family farms, and historic industrial architecture. Additionally, it contains an array of scenic and natural resources such as rocky coasts and harbors, marshlands, and rivers. Essex National Heritage Area spans 500 square miles in northeastern Massachusetts, and includes 34 cities and towns.

The Essex National Heritage Area is managed by the Essex National Heritage Commission (Commission), which facilitates public private partnerships for the preservation of heritage

resources and works closely with National Park Service staff at Salem Maritime National Historic Site and Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, both of which are within the boundary of the national heritage area. The Commission's work focuses on regional initiatives for heritage programming, interpretation, and education, preservation and resource stewardship, heritage development and infrastructure, and planning and design.

During its 16 years of existence, Essex National Heritage Area has a significant record of achievement. The national heritage area has worked closely with National Park Service staff at Salem Maritime and Saugus Iron Works on a variety of educational and interpretive programs to educate visitors and students about local heritage resources. One successful example is the Trails & Sails weekend, a county-wide event that involves more than 50 host organizations at over 140 locations in Essex County in providing interpretive tours, hikes, walks, sail trips, and special events at no charge to participants. The Essex Local History In a National Context program has also successfully brought the main themes of the Essex National Heritage Area into area classrooms.

The national heritage area has played a significant role in local communities in helping to inventory and research historic resources. Working with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Essex National Heritage Area created a catalog of heritage landscapes that communities had identified as being valuable and worthy of protection. In all, communities identified 1,320 resources in 24 of the 34 municipalities included within the boundary of the national heritage area. Additionally, the inventory articulated strategies for preserving these historic resources and landscapes.

Essex National Heritage Area has also implemented a successful public information and wayfinding campaign for promoting tourism. More than 80 directional highway signs have been installed within the national heritage area that point visitors toward regional visitor centers and historic and natural visitor destinations. These signs not only have helped visitors find tourism destinations within Essex National Heritage Area, they have also helped create a regional identity for the national heritage area. Essex National Heritage Area also plays a significant role in leveraging federal dollars. In total, Essex National Heritage Area has received approximately \$13.2 million in federal funding, and every federal dollar has been matched at least once with non-federal dollars.

S. 1186, as written, would extend the authorization of federal funding for Essex National Heritage Area for an additional 15 years and increase the authorization of appropriations by \$10 million. The Essex National Heritage Area is one of the nine national heritage areas identified for evaluation by the National Park Service pursuant to Public Law 110-229. The completed Essex National Heritage Area evaluation was recently transmitted to Congress this past month. The evaluation report includes recommendations on the future role of the National Park Service in the area.

We recommend a technical amendment to the long title of the bill to make it clear that the bill would extend the authorization for Federal funding for the heritage area instead of reauthorizing the heritage area. While the Essex National Heritage Area faces a sunset for its federal funding, its national heritage area designation does not sunset.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the committee may have.