

**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. 702, A BILL TO DESIGNATE THE QUINEBAUG AND SHETUCKET RIVERS VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR AS “THE LAST GREEN VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR”.**

**July 31, 2013**

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Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 702, a bill designate the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor as “The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor.”

The Department supports enactment of S. 702. This legislation would change the name of the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor to “The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor.” It has been proven over the years that the current name of the heritage corridor is both difficult for people to remember and to spell. This change would help improve the identification of the corridor for the many partners involved with the heritage area and would be consistent with how the area is promoted in and beyond the region.

The Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor was designated a National Heritage Area by Congress in November 1994 through P.L. 103-449. At that time, Congress recognized that the valley represents one of the last traditional upland farming and mill village communities in the Northeastern United States. In 1999, Congress passed P.L. 106-449 to enlarge the corridor to include river valley towns in both Massachusetts and Connecticut. Now forest and farmland make up 78 percent of its 695,000-acres, yet it lies only an hour from three of New England's four largest urban areas. This relatively undeveloped rural island, in the midst of the most urbanized region in the nation, makes it a resource of local, regional, and national importance.

The Department first became involved in the area in 1992 when the National Park Service (NPS) undertook a feasibility study. The name “The Last Green Valley” was coined by a NPS historian and was later used in a NPS brochure. People in the area have been associating the river corridor with the term “The Last Green Valley” ever since.

The NPS has provided technical assistance and managed an agreement with the management entity of the heritage area from the time it was designated, and continues to do so today. That management entity started using the name, *The Last Green Valley*, informally in 2001, and the board decided to officially change the name of its nonprofit through the Secretaries of State in both Massachusetts and Connecticut in November 2008.

Changing the name of the corridor through this bill will be consistent with how people in the region refer to the area and with the name of the management entity with which the NPS has an official agreement – The Last Green Valley, Inc.

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