

STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 2441, S. 2570, AND S. 2604, BILLS PROVIDING REVISED AUTHORITIES FOR THE STEEL INDUSTRY AMERICAN HERITAGE AREA, THE ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA, AND THE OIL REGION NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA.

AUGUST 15, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 2441, S. 2570, and S. 2604, bills providing revised authorities for the Rivers of Steel Heritage Area, the Essex National Heritage Area, and the Oil Region National Heritage Area, respectively.

The Department recognizes that each of these entities serves an important role in preserving, interpreting, and promoting the unique natural and cultural characteristics that led to their designation as national heritage areas by Congress. However, we do not support extending authorities for these heritage areas to continue to receive Federal funding, especially at a time when we are focusing resources on reducing the National Park Service's \$11.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog and addressing other critical national park needs. The Department has no objection to the provision in S. 2604 that updates the name of the management entity for the Oil Region National Heritage Area.

S. 2441 would repeal the funding limitation for the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, which is currently \$17 million and is expected to be reached in FY 2019. The Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area tells the story of the industrialists and workers who shaped the American steel industry starting from southwestern Pennsylvania.

S. 2570 would repeal the funding authorization sunset and the total funding limitation for the Essex National Heritage Area. This national heritage area's funding limitation of \$17 million is expected to be reached in FY 2020, and its funding authority will sunset at the end of FY 2021. Essex National Heritage Area in eastern Massachusetts highlights colonial settlements, maritime adventures, and centuries of American growth.

S. 2604 would extend the funding authorization sunset through FY 2026, and the funding limitation to \$20 million, for the Oil Region National Heritage Area. The funding authorization will sunset either in late 2019 or early 2020 (depending on the interpretation of when funds were first made available). This heritage area's current funding limitation of \$10 million, however, is not expected to be reached for several years. The bill also would substitute in law the name used by the heritage area's management entity, the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry, and Tourism, for the name used previously, the Oil Heritage Region, Inc. The Oil Region National Heritage Area commemorates the region surrounding Edwin Drake's oil well of 1859 near Titusville, Pennsylvania, which gave rise to the modern oil industry.

There are currently 49 Congressionally designated national heritage areas. Several more have been proposed for designation in pending legislation. Nearly all of the heritage areas were initially authorized with dates on which their eligibility to receive funding through the National Park Service would sunset, usually a period of 15 years. Nearly all were also authorized with a funding limitation, usually \$10 million. Both types of limitations were intended to promote self-sufficiency for the heritage areas. The Department urges the Committee to return to that original concept by refraining from acting on bills extending these authorities.

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