

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. 1138, A BILL TO REAUTHORIZE THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY 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. 1138, a bill to reauthorize the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area.

The Department recognizes the important work of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area to preserve heritage resources in the Hudson River Valley between Yonkers and Troy, New York. We recommend that S. 1138 be amended to authorize an extension for heritage area program funding until we have completed an evaluation and report on the accomplishments of the area and the future role of the National Park Service; and until national heritage area program legislation is enacted that standardizes timeframes and funding for designated national heritage areas. Consistent with congressional directives in the FY 2009 and FY 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 national 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.

S. 1138, as introduced, would extend the authorization of federal funding for the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area for an additional 9 years. The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area was established in 1996 by Public Law 104-333. The national heritage area includes 250 communities in ten counties bordering the Hudson River for 154 miles of tidal estuary along with three million acres of the Hudson Highlands, the Catskill Mountains, rolling farmland and compact villages, as well as small cities and hamlets. The region extends from the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers, south to the northern border of New York City.

The mission of this national heritage area is to recognize, preserve, and promote the natural and cultural resources of the Hudson River Valley. This is accomplished through a voluntary partnership with communities and citizens, and local, state, and federal agencies emphasizing public access, economic development, regional planning, and interpretive programs.

Public Law 104-333 designated the Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council and the Greenway Heritage Conservancy, Inc., as the local coordinating entities for the national heritage area. The heritage area local coordinating entities facilitate public private partnerships for the preservation of heritage resources and work closely with National Park Service staff at Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites. The national heritage area'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, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area has a significant record of achievement and, with government funding assistance since its establishment, has shown significant success in working with partners and the federal government to preserve, interpret, and promote the significant resources in their local areas. Every federal dollar has been matched with non-federal funds. In total, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area has received nearly \$9 million in federal funding, and every federal dollar has been matched at least once with non-federal funds.

The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area has taken the lead on numerous initiatives to engage the public. One such initiative, *Heritage Weekend*, gives visitors the opportunity to discover – or rediscover—many historic, architectural, and natural treasures in the state. The national heritage area staff also works tirelessly to connect sites and schools to create unique place-based curriculum; this curriculum can be replicated and used by others through a website that provides academic resources regarding the heritage and culture of the Hudson River Valley. Moreover, the staff facilitates the creation of region-wide “shows” focusing on nature and culture sub-themes. On a more fundamental level, the staff prints map and guides, and advances a graphic identity at partner sites. The staff also continues to help communities and trail groups establish a system of trails that link cultural and historic sites, parks, open spaces, and community centers. This trail system provides public access to the Hudson River as well.

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 national heritage area instead of reauthorizing the national heritage area. While the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area faces a sunset for its Federal funding, its national heritage area designation will 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.