

**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, S. 2395, TO AUTHORIZE THE PROVISION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE PRESERVE AMERICA PROGRAM AND TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO ENTER INTO PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITIES ADJACENT TO THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM TO LEVERAGE LOCAL CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM ASSETS.**

**December 12, 2018**

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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. 2395, a law to authorize technical assistance under the Preserve America Program and to direct the Secretary of the Interior to enter into partnerships with communities adjacent to the National Park System to leverage local cultural heritage tourism assets.

The Department does not support S. 2395. The National Park Service (NPS) is already actively engaged in programs for cultural heritage tourism and historic preservation, similar to those described in this bill. S. 2395 creates duplicative authorities with additional reporting requirements. Should this bill be enacted it would be subject to the availability of appropriations and would need to be balanced with other park and program priorities of the National Park Service.

S. 2395 would support cultural heritage tourism and historic preservation through a partnership with the Department of the Interior, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Department of Commerce through the Preserve America program. The goals of this program are to provide communities with technical and economic assistance, where feasible, focused on preserving and promoting historic resources. The Federal partners would be responsible for creating a metric to analyze the economic and preservation impacts of the Preserve America program. Additionally, the program would increase the partnership activities with communities adjacent to a unit of the National Park System, known as gateway communities.

Currently, the NPS offers more than 50 community assistance programs, many of which directly support heritage tourism and historic preservation partnerships with gateway communities.

The Preserve America Program was established in 2003 under Executive Order 13287 to promote historic resources, heritage tourism, and economic development at the Federal, state, tribal, and local levels of government as well as in the private sector. The program encouraged more efficient and informed uses of historic resources for economic development and public benefit. In 2009, Congress permanently authorized the Preserve America Program. As specified in Public Law 111-11, the Department of the Interior and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation council jointly administer the program.

The Secretary of the Interior, in partnership with the Council, is authorized to provide competitive grants to States, local governments, tribes, state historic preservation offices, and tribal historic preservation offices to support preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education, and historic preservation planning activities. These projects include research, historic survey, education and interpretation, planning, training and outreach, and other non-construction projects that identify and promote historic properties.

Under Title 54, the Preserve America grant program is authorized for up to a \$25 million appropriation for each fiscal year; however, there has not been an appropriation for the program since 2010. From 2006 until 2010, the NPS administered over \$21 million in grant funding for the program through Preserve America Communities. Communities eligible to receive these grant funds supported activities and programs using historic preservation to promote heritage tourism and required a dollar-for-dollar match. Communities continue to be designated as Preserve America Communities through an application process that considers a community's preservation efforts and existing historic assets. More than 900 municipalities, neighborhoods, counties, and tribes have been recognized as Preserve America Communities. They are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U. S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

The Preserve America program closely mirrors the NPS managed Certified Local Government (CLG) program. This program was congressionally authorized in 1980 and established a Federal designation for communities that support preservation activities. There are over 2000 CLGs throughout the country, and over 85% of those communities are gateways to our national parks and historic sites. CLGs are provided technical assistance and funding through partnerships with respective State Historic Preservation Offices that distribute more than \$4.5 million annually to CLGs for local preservation priorities.

The NPS is linked with the gateway tourism economy and promotes community tourism through the national Tourism Office and uses a variety of community assistance programs, grant programs, and unique cultural heritage programs to promote community tourism. In 2017, the NPS received an estimated 331 million recreation visits and visitors spent \$18.2 billion in the gateway regions.

The NPS already provides assistance to gateway communities in similar ways to those described in this bill. For example, the Land and Water Conservation Fund State Assistance program administers the "state side" of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to help state and local governments meet their need for well-planned, high quality public outdoor recreation opportunities to enhance the quality of life, and the health and vitality of a community. The LWCF program granted more than \$100 million to state and community partners in 2018.

Another popular gateway community program is the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA). RTCA works with private and public partners to extend the benefits and resources of the NPS to protect and enhance natural, cultural and outdoor recreation resources in communities throughout the country. Through RTCA staff, communities can engage stakeholders and partners to identify and develop sustainable tourism, concept plans for trails and parks, community outreach and participation strategies, and identify historic heritage and cultural resources.

The Department recognizes the value of the Preserve America Program and supports preservation and tourism efforts throughout the United States through a variety of outreach programs that provide both economic and technical assistance resources to the field. This legislation would be duplicative of those existing programs and would redirect resources that the NPS is currently using to provide similar benefits.

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