

CONNECTING THE

Heart & Soul

OF AMERICAN COMMUNITIES



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While National Heritage Areas generate jobs and tax revenues through economic development, they also impact communities at a deeper level. American history is comprised of soaring accomplishments alongside painful struggle. Together, they embody our national character.

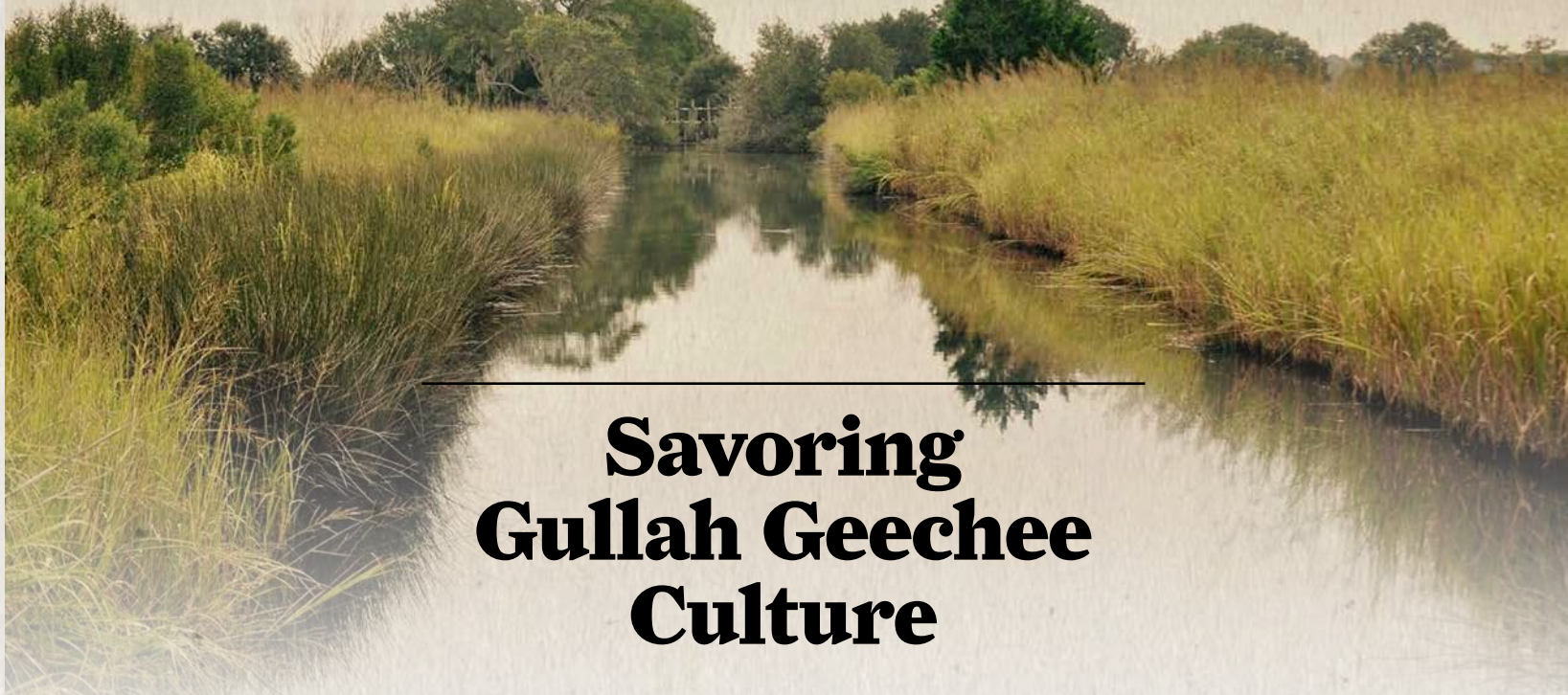
In this edition, we focus on 13 more communities throughout the nation where National Heritage Areas have helped work through those struggles — bringing diverse communities together for the common good.

ANHLA

Alliance of National Heritage Areas



PHOTOS Clockwise from top: Geechee Gullah Ring Shouters of Darien, Georgia with U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith in July 2018. The title poem of her new book, “Wade in the Water”, is dedicated to them / The Jenkins Praise House on St. Helena Island, South Carolina / Photograph depicting a ring shout and believed to have been taken in Georgia in the 1930’s / Grave located in the cemetery of Midway Presbyterian Church in Midway, Georgia, which is located in rural Liberty County **OPPOSITE:** An abandoned rice field at the Caw Caw Interpretive Center in Ravenel, South Carolina



Savoring Gullah Geechee Culture

ON A HUMID NIGHT IN EARLY JUNE, a group of chefs and their guests came together on a Johns Island, South Carolina farm owned by third-generation Gullah Geechee farmer, Joseph Fields. Gullah chef B.J. Dennis served traditional Gullah Geechee dishes like okra soup and Charleston red rice. A pit barbecue held a whole lamb and pig sourced from neighboring Wadmalaw Island. Many at the dinner were familiar with the dishes but likely knew much less about the deep relationship between their Gullah Geechee hosts and the very land where they stood balancing their plates of barbecue and cornmeal fritters.

The Gullah Geechee are direct descendants of people who came from sophisticated agricultural societies along Africa’s west coast, countries now known as Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. Trafficked across the Atlantic into Charleston and Savannah, the enslaved brought their knowledge of tidal rice cultivation, enabling the region to grow wealthy as rice production took off in the late 17th century.

Tidal rice cultivation, though labor-intensive and technically difficult, flourished once West African technology was introduced. Intricate systems of canals, dikes, sluices, and trunks redirected fresh water as it was pushed upstream by rising tides. While slaves endured dangerous conditions, working in mosquito-filled swamps where malaria and yellow fever flourished, European planters were absentee owners who spent much of their time in the pine lands and cities. This led to highly “Africanized” plantations, where the enslaved managed the rice production under the direction of a white overseer.

The Gullah Geechee are best understood through their relationship to the land , which is widely considered

the most valuable of all Gullah Geechee cultural assets and has always been the base for economic and social development. After slavery ended, family farms like the Fields Farm were often the primary source of income. Gullah Geechee land owners were able to develop a self-sustaining economy based on the small-scale production of cotton, subsistence agriculture, and truck farming supplemented with fishing and harvesting shrimp and oysters. As a result, many were able to avoid the hazards of tenant farming and sharecropping. Today, the Gullah Geechee face new hazards with each hurricane that barrels down on the land that defines them.

For hundreds of years, the Gullah Geechee have resided along the coasts of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Their ancestors, though all West African, were culturally, linguistically, and spiritually diverse. Over time, a new creole culture and language – now known as Gullah Geechee – emerged on these isolated island and coastal plantations and is now recognized as one of the great, foundational cultures of the United States. Here you will find hand-crafted sweetgrass baskets that reflect ancient West African weaving traditions; century-old praise houses hosting “ring shouts” (the oldest surviving African-American performance tradition); and dishes, like Chef Dennis’ red rice, that connect today’s Gullah Geechee chefs to the cook pots of their ancestors. And here you will find acres of rice fields, silent and verdant memorials to the unfathomable sacrifices and inspiring perseverance of the Gullah Geechee people.

■ **SOUTH CAROLINA** | Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor | GullahGeecheeCorridor.org

Nature-Based Tourism

This past October, the Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area (MGCNHA) held a series of events to recognize the first group of nature-based tourism businesses who have qualified for the Gulf Coast Outpost program. Gulf Coast Outpost (GCO) is a business recognition program developed and implemented by the MGCNHA. The program raises awareness of nature-based businesses who go above and beyond to protect and conserve the environment on which their businesses depends.

Gulf Coast outpost was created following a year-long process of working with industry stakeholders to determine ways to grow economic development in nature-based tourism while balancing conservation. The program targets companies whose primary business is dependent on the natural environment in Mississippi’s six coastal counties. This includes eco-tours, locally-owned outfitters, charter boat operators, tour guides, eco-lodges and agritourism entities.

Eight business thus far have received the GCO distinction which provides the customer with a sense of confidence that the businesses



prioritizes customer safety and works hard to protect and conserve the natural environment of South Mississippi. This program also demonstrates the Heritage Area’s collaborative approach, as it works with other organizations—such as Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast, the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain, and the USM Marine Education Center—to achieve a healthy, nature-based tourism economy and environment.

■ **MISSISSIPPI** | Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area | MSGulfCoastHeritage.ms.gov



The community was the site of the December 1776 Battle of Trenton and the January 1777 Battle of Assunpink Creek that followed Washington’s Christmas crossing of the Delaware River. Historians consider these battles as the turning point of the American Revolution.

“While the Old Barracks regularly gets visits from school groups around the state, students from Trenton rarely make visits here,” said Crossroads Executive Director Janice Selinger. “History becomes so much more real when you see it happened in your own neighborhood. We’re hoping this project will spark a lifelong interest and pride in Trenton’s Revolutionary history among these youngsters.”

The fourth graders will continue their research through classroom visits from historians and re-enactors, and then will create video themes and scripts for the final product, which they will produce on iPads. The student videos will be shown in the spring at a special red-carpet premiere at Martin Luther King Elementary School.

■ **NEW JERSEY** | Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area | RevolutionaryNJ.org

Revolutionary Learning

Trenton, NJ elementary school students are discovering the pivotal history in their own backyard thanks to an innovative program created by Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area. On a recent visit to the Old Barracks Museum, fourth graders from Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School learned that the 18th century structure served as a military hospital during the Revolution, and was among the places where Continental Army soldiers received smallpox inoculations.

The Old Barracks visit was part of a year-long class project during which students learn about the American Revolution and produce videos about the impact on the war on 18th century Trenton residents.



Bringing Greenagers to Work

The pastoral hills, forests, and fields of Massachusetts’ Berkshires are home to an innovative partnership that connects area youth with world-class culture. The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (Housatonic Heritage) and Greenagers have teamed up to create a unique opportunity to expose teenagers to places of historic and cultural significance.

Centered in and around Great Barrington, MA., the Greenagers program connects area youth with paid stewardship work, school-based field trips, and outdoor activities. Through its paid employment programs, internships, and apprenticeships,

Greenagers engages teens and young adults in meaningful work in environmental conservation, sustainable farming, and natural resource management.

By adding cultural landscapes to the Greenagers’ programs, Housatonic Heritage has helped Greenagers to add an extra layer of meaning to their natural resource work and to explore how ‘connection to place’ builds stewardship among future generations.

On behalf of Greenagers, Housatonic Heritage works with cultural organizations to create meaningful interactions between the participants and the cultural site. Partners—including Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Norman Rockwell Museum, and Hancock Shaker Village—have embraced the host work crews and enjoyed the opportunities for youth engagement. With a “captive audience” of teens, the partners were also able to develop, revise, and refine their interpretive

strategies to create compelling programs for teen audiences.

Across our nation, individuals and organizations strive to preserve our natural and cultural resources. The Housatonic-Greenagers partnership puts the next generation at the center of this work, and in doing so not only preserves our heritage but passes on the skills to continue this important work to future generations.

■ **MASSACHUSETTS** | Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area | HousatonicHeritage.org



Making The Last Green Valley More Accessible

Not everyone can access the trails of The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor by foot. A team of volunteers for The Last Green Valley, Inc., the non-profit that stewards the National Heritage Corridor, takes that personally.

TLGV's Trail Assessment Team is driven to help loved ones with mobility challenges get back on the trail. Gabe Sipson, a paraplegic who was once a forester and passionate outdoorsman, epitomizes what drives the team. An accident at work left Sipson in a wheelchair, and he could not find information about trails that might be suited to his abilities.

"When I'm out in the forest, it makes me feel like, I don't know what the best word is — calmer, and more centered with myself," said Sipson. "My perspectives are aligned better with what's really important."

Funded by two grants, the Trail Assessment Team has examined more than 35 miles of trail. The team was the first east of the Mississippi River to use new, advanced technology to assess trails. During the winter months, the team downloads the data and creates detailed trail access summaries to help trail users like Sipson understand their options.

But the work is far from done. Though Sipson is back on the trail, his choices are still limited. "There are many more miles of trail to assess," said Lois Bruinooge, executive director of TLGV. "The work the team has done is incredible and we're committed to doing more so people of all ages and abilities can enjoy the natural beauty of our National Heritage Corridor."

■ **CONNECTICUT & MASSACHUSETTS**
The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor
TheLastGreenValley.org

Get Your Tail on the Trail

When the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor partnered with St. Luke's University Health Network for *Get Your Tail on the Trail*, it was a win-win for our community's health, the D&L mission, and the local environment. Over the past five years, 6,100 participants have logged over 4.1 million miles along the D&L Trail, which spans five counties from northeast Pennsylvania through the Lehigh Valley and Bucks County.

"I started to walk on the trail for my health," says Amy Hollander, a participant from Pohatcong Township, NJ. "The [*Tail on the Trail*] app kept me on track, and I lost about 10 pounds."

St. Luke's University Health Networks was established 150+ years ago to care for the Corridor's iron and steel workers, as well as those who toiled in coal mines. Today, *Tail on the Trail* is an integral part of St. Luke's "Healthy Living Initiative," addressing the national mandate for nonprofit hospitals to conduct Community Health Needs Assessments every three years. The program got people up, outdoors, and moving through guided bike rides, walks, and runs along the spine of the 165-mile National Heritage Corridor.

By linking St. Luke's health expertise with D&L's leadership, participants have not only shown increased health—they are more creative and happier.

"I found that the real benefit was to my writing," Hollander says. "All my best ideas come when I am walking on the trail. Whenever I am blocked, a mile or two on the path and I can let go of all the day-to-day details, and the story just comes to me."

■ **PENNSYLVANIA** | Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor | DelawareAndLehigh.org



Expanding Educational Access to the Erie Canal

Every 4th grader in New York State learns about the Erie Canal, but not all get a chance to see and experience it. Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's *Ticket to Ride* and *Every Kid in a Park* programs are turning that around so that students learn firsthand about the vision, innovations, and perseverance that have characterized the legendary NYS Canal System.

Erie Canalway's *Ticket to Ride* and *Every Kid in a Park* programs provide non-competitive grant support to schools for field trips to canal-focused museums and historic sites and to four National Park sites located within the Corridor. More than 45,000 students from 250 schools, and 110 districts, have participated since 2012. To date, more than 64% of participating students have been from lower-income schools (majority enrollment in the federal free/reduced lunch program) located in both urban and rural districts.

The robust programs reinforce classroom learning about the Erie Canal with hands-on experiences at authentic canal sites. Pre- and post-visit activities strengthen important lessons learned and make key connections between the Erie Canal and critical social issues such as women's rights, the Underground Railroad, and immigration. Overall, the programs provide greater access to New York's rich historic and cultural experiences.

Reinvigorating a passion for place and championing the value of the Erie Canal as a relevant part of the lives of Corridor students are primary goals of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's *Ticket to Ride* and *Every Kid in a Park* programs.

■ **NEW YORK** | Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor | Eriecanalway.org



Declaring Independence: Then & Now

What does the Declaration of Independence mean today, and what did it mean to citizens throughout the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area when it was first conceived and debated during their lifetime? These are the questions considered in the public program *Declaring Independence: Then & Now*.

The program tells the story of people living within the 45 communities of the heritage area in the spring and summer of 1776 and portrays how they debated and celebrated the declaring of independence from Great Britain. Offered in partnership with community organizations, each presentation includes a narrated reading of the Declaration of Independence, interspersed with the words spoken by local individuals as researched by citizen historians.

As the 18th century words and ideas are performed, the narrator explores their meaning to challenge the audience to consider the promises made in that foundational document through the lens of both the past and the present. Presentations are held in historic venues, often the same one in which the original discussions occurred.

Declaring Independence: Then & Now continues to evolve as each community explores its part in the story of American Independence and in our expanding aspirations for freedom and equality. Audiences are inspired and challenged by hearing the Declaration of Independence anew. Civic engagement and interest in our country's founding principles are high, and *Declaring Independence* provides an interactive forum in which to explore both.

■ **MASSACHUSETTS/NEW HAMPSHIRE**
| Freedom's Way National Heritage Area |
FreedomsWay.org



Showcasing the Hudson River School

The Hudson River Valley Ramble is an annual event series that celebrates the history, culture, and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, as well as the amazing landscape, communities, and trails throughout the region. Every September, 'Rambles' come not only from the Hudson Valley region and New York State, but from other regions of the country as well to discover the riches our Valley has to offer.

The Newburgh Open Studios tour was a Ramble event that offered a unique opportunity to see the work and meet many of the artists in the City of Newburgh's burgeoning arts community. The studios are located in some incredibly preserved historic structures, most of which are rarely open to the public. This self-guided tour provided an intriguing connection between the art culture and historical significance that the Hudson River Valley is known for.

The Newburgh Open Studios tour was scheduled to coincide with the Ramble as an additional way to reach a broad audience. Last year close to 2,000 visitors experienced the studio tour, and Ramble Event Leader Michael Gabor anticipates an increase in participating artists and turnout at future events. "Our artists loved the event!" said Gabor, and "as a historic community that was used as a location/viewing point for many Hudson River School paintings, it is appropriate and encouraging that once again Newburgh is becoming an arts community tied closely to its history, architecture and views that have changed little."

■ **NEW YORK** | Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area | HudsonRiverValley.com

Bringing Children & Nature Together

As a managing organization of the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition plays an active role in connecting community members with the cultural, historical, and recreational assets of the Ohio & Erie Canal and Towpath Trail, and creating stewards to carry on the legacy to future generations.

During the fall of the 2018, the organization had the privilege of hosting its annual Fishing Derby, where more than 150 children and their families from Akron Public schools spent an afternoon fishing in the Ohio & Erie Canal. The children worked with volunteers to bait hooks, cast their lines, and catch fish – blue gill, catfish, and more – before releasing them back into the canal.

Over nearly 20 years, this program has welcomed thousands of children, offering an opportunity to interact with the natural resources in their own neighborhoods. This program also offers the opportunity to engage local businesses who support the mission of the Ohio & Erie Canalway and take hands-on roles in cultivating future stewards of our natural resources. More than 50 businesses and individuals sponsored this program in 2018, including core sponsors Cargill, PNC Bank, and Huntington Bank, with many other local organizations volunteering to support the staff and children.

The Fishing Derby is just one example in a year of programming designed to bring awareness and support to the cultural, historical, and recreational assets of the Ohio & Erie Canalway. We're excited to continue connecting with the communities that call our National Heritage Area home.

■ **OHIO** | Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area | OhioAndErieCanalway.com



Preservation Leads to Recognition of a Well-Trodden Past



Deep in the heart of South Park National Heritage Area is a landscape that takes you back 150 years. The Tarryall Road was once a much-used trail for the mountain Paleo-Indians and more recently for the Ute tribes that held this landscape in high regard. With Westward Expansion came gold-diggers, miners, and ranchers. Despite centuries of use, the Tarryall Road is a treasured secret, lined with historic ranches, miner’s cabins, cemeteries, and archaeological sites and ruins.

Local ranchers, property owners, and preservationists have come together to save this idyllic landscape, where nature’s bounty and historic remains blend seamlessly together. With assistance from the State Historical Fund, the state Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and outstanding experts from throughout Colorado, Park County residents worked to preserve this unique environment.

On November 1, 2017, the Tarryall Rural Historic District, which encompasses over 28,000 acres stretching along CR77 from Jefferson down to U.S. Highway 24, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On August 25, 2018 a celebratory bus tour was organized for all Park County residents, with History Colorado presenting the National Register plaque! The preservation team will also be receiving a 2019 Stephen H. Hart Award for Historic Preservation, History Colorado’s premiere recognition of archaeology and preservation projects.

So if you find yourself wandering in South Park and come across an idyllic landscape of unmatched natural beauty and preserved reminders of a past long gone, then tip your hat to the grassroots partnerships that preserve our amazing heritage.

■ **COLORADO** | South Park National Heritage Area
| SouthParkHeritage.org



Historic Academy Restored

Of the many relationships the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA) has fostered,, none is more successful than its partnership with Wasatch Academy--the birthplace of Utah’s modern education system. Located in Mt. Pleasant, Wasatch Academy was founded by Presbyterian minister and teacher Duncan McMillan shortly after he arrived in Utah in 1875. Wasatch Academy went on to become a great success, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

With seed money of \$85,000 from MPNHA, the school generated approximately \$4 million toward restoration of its historic buildings, exemplifying how heritage areas can develop partnerships to improve their community and leverage funds.

Paul Applegarth of Wasatch Academy credits MPNHA for catalyzing the vital preservation efforts. “The first grant that we received from

the MPNHA sparked the interest of another donor, who funded the renovation of the original Wasatch Academy School building called Liberal Hall,” Applegarth says. “Prior to the renovation, Liberal Hall was in bad shape. Without the grant, we may have ultimately lost Liberal Hall, a valuable piece of history.”

Wasatch Academy’s mix of academic excellence and storied heritage has also improved its community by attracting talented students from all over the world. Wasatch students hail from 38 countries and 28 American states. Students from China, Pakistan, Mali, Afghanistan and Germany, for example, come to the small community of Mt. Pleasant, which proudly serves the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area.”

■ **UTAH** | Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area
| MormonPioneerHeritage.org



Supporting a Historic Mutual Aid Society

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and the History Colorado State Historic Fund will provide funding for the interior and exterior restoration and rehabilitation of the original La Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos (SPMDTU) headquarters in Conejos County, Colorado. The SPMDTU is the oldest Hispanic civil rights organization in the United States. It was founded in Antonito, a small town located in the southern part of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, by Celedonio Mondragón and six others on November 26, 1900. In the mid-1900s, it had 65 concilios locales (local councils), in small towns throughout southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, including three in Utah. After World War II, it had a total of 3,000 members. The SPMDTU began as a mutual aid organization that sought, through non-violent actions, to combat the exploitation of Hispanic workers by land barons, mine owners, and the railroads. The original SPMDTU meeting hall located is listed in the “State Register of Historic Properties” and the “National Register of Historic Places” in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Social History. Today, the organization is still active. Its concilios locales conduct monthly meetings and functions, in order to further the organization’s vision. The SPMDTU is comprised of a diverse group of men and

women committed to enriching Hispanic communities and families, with fund raising efforts aimed at providing and enhancing community services. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage area is home to Colorado’s oldest Hispano, agricultural and railroad communities. With over 11,000 years of documented human inhabitation, this is where Colorado began.

■ **COLORADO** | Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
| SDCNHA.org/wp/



“National Heritage Areas are considered one of the Department of the Interior’s most cost effective initiatives, relying on a public/private partnership in which every federal dollar is matched with an average of \$5.50 in other public and private financing.”

—Congressmen Paul Tonko (D-NY) & David McKinley (R-WV)

National Heritage Area Act of 2019

ANHA has previously worked with staff at the National Park Service and members of Congress to develop program legislation for National Heritage Areas. In the last session of Congress, the legislation drew broad bi-partisan support of more than 60 House members from 24 states — and support is expected to grow in the current session. The legislation is being re-introduced by Congressman Paul Tonko (D-NY) and Congressman David McKinley (R-WV).

What does this bill do?

- Establishes a standardized set of criteria for new NHAs
- Establishes a rigorous process for existing NHAs to ensure accountability
- Modernizes the program to ensure long-term sustainability with an initial program authorization period of 20 years
- Replaces a haphazard system of funding caps with an annual authorization amount of \$700,000 for each and every National Heritage Area
- Clearly defines an oversight structure that will allow these popular public/private partnerships to better preserve the nation’s heritage and spur economic growth with basic federal support
- Remains consistent with recommendations of both the Bush and Obama administrations

To join the Congressional caucus on National Heritage Areas, please contact:

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SUPPORT ADEQUATE FUNDING LEVELS FOR OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

As the chart demonstrates, funding for National Heritage Areas has lagged far behind the needs and popularity of the program. An enhanced level of funding of \$32 million will ensure that all current areas can continue their important work of telling America’s stories at the grass roots level.

www.NationalHeritageAreas.us

Between 2004-2016, the number of National Heritage Areas increased by **104%**, while funding increased by **only 33%**.

