

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 2743, TO AMEND THE JOHN D. DINGELL, JR. CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT, AND RECREATION ACT TO DESIGNATE AS A COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA SYSTEM THE FINGER LAKES NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**MAY 15, 2024**

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Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 2743, to amend the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act to designate as a component of the National Heritage Area System the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area in the State of New York, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 2743.

S. 2743 would designate the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area to conserve, enhance, and interpret those nationally significant stories and the natural, historic, scenic, and cultural resources within the Finger Lakes region that illustrate significant aspects of the heritage of the United States. The bill provides that the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area will consist of Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, and Yates Counties in the State of New York. The bill also identifies the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance as the coordinating entity for the National Heritage Area.

The Finger Lakes are a chain of narrow lakes found in west-central New York. The 11 lakes roughly stretch from Syracuse to Rochester and were once north-to-south flowing rivers that were dammed by the retreat of glaciers during the last ice age. The Finger Lakes' 14-county region is important for its continuing agricultural practices, foodways, conservation ethics social movement history, its distinctive regional landscape, and as the ancestral home of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy whose governance model is considered the inspiration for aspects of our federal Constitution and whose nations continue to thrive today.

The National Park Service conducted a feasibility study of the proposed national heritage area pursuant to P.L. 116-9, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which was transmitted to Congress in July 2023. The study identified an assemblage of natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition and are best managed through partnerships such as in a national heritage area. The study area met the ten national heritage area evaluation criteria and therefore is considered appropriate for national heritage area designation.

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