

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. 924, A BILL TO AMEND THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL DEVELOPMENT ACT TO EXTEND THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK COMMISSION.

JUNE 21, 2023

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 924, a bill to amend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act to extend the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission.

The Department supports S. 924.

S. 924 would reauthorize the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission (Commission) through September 30, 2034, ten years beyond the Commission's currently authorized termination date of September 26, 2024.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park (park) is a 184.5-mile-long linear park that covers roughly 20,000 acres along the Potomac River from the middle of Washington, DC to Cumberland, Maryland. The Canal provides a place for visitors to enjoy nature and recreate but is also a place where important stories of American history are preserved through the telling of the Canal's role in western expansion, transportation, engineering, the Civil War, immigration, industry, and commerce.

Since its establishment in 1971, the Commission has provided a vital link between the surrounding communities and the National Park Service (NPS), which manages the operations, maintenance, and restoration of the park. The park crosses 19 political jurisdictions, and the Commission has played a key role in helping the NPS communicate and engage with partners, local governments, and the public along the length of the park. For example, the Commission has offered recommendations to improve visitor enjoyment and safety along the Potomac River, increase recreational opportunities and amenities, and manage scenic easements. The Commission's 19 members are appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to five-year terms. Three are at-large members. The Governors of Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia each recommend two members for appointment. The governing bodies of the four Maryland counties bordering the Canal also each recommend two members for appointment.

The Commission advises the Secretary on policy and other matters relating to the development and administration of the park. The Commission supports the mission of the park through its deliberation on many resource and visitor enjoyment issues facing the park. The Department supports extending the Commission to continue affording the Secretary the ability to consider

these matters as they relate to the multiple States, counties, and towns that the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal runs through from Washington D.C. to Cumberland, Maryland.

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