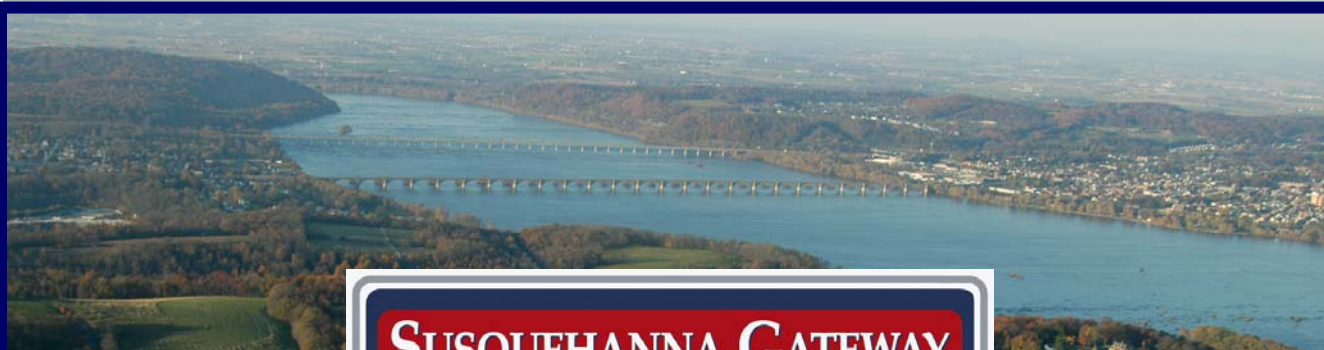




**SUSQUEHANNA GATEWAY
HERITAGE AREA**

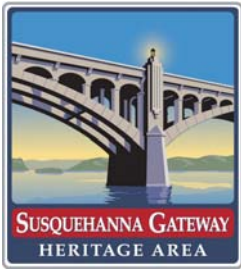
**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS**

**Hearing to Receive Testimony on
S. 349 to Establish the
Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area
in the State of Pennsylvania**

Wednesday, May 19, 2010, 2:30 pm, SD 366

**Testimony of
Mark N. Platts, President
Susquehanna Heritage Corporation
Management Entity for the
Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area**

**Prepared by the
Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area
May 2010**



**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS**

Hearing to Receive Testimony on S. 349 to Establish the
Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area in the State of Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 19, 2010, 2:30 pm, SD 366

**Testimony of Mark N. Platts, President
Susquehanna Heritage Corporation
Management Entity for the Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area**

Chairman Udall, Senator Burr, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of S. 349, an act to establish the Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area in Pennsylvania's Lancaster and York Counties, along the scenic and historic Susquehanna River. I am Mark Platts, President of the Susquehanna Heritage Corporation, a non-profit organization and management entity for the Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area, one of Pennsylvania's twelve state-designated heritage areas.

The Susquehanna River was recently named by National Geographic as the mightiest river on the Atlantic seaboard and Mother of the Chesapeake Bay. As a native son of York County, now residing with my family in Lancaster County and working everyday on the shores of the Susquehanna, I am proud to come before you today to highlight the Susquehanna Gateway region's unique and important place in our nation's history and share why this special corner of America merits designation as a National Heritage Area.

A Place with a National Story to Share

According to the National Park Service, *"a National Heritage Area is a place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These areas tell nationally important stories about our nation and are representative of the national experience through both the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved within in them."*



The Susquehanna Gateway region's role in American history and its rich cultural and natural heritage exemplify the values inherent in the National Heritage Areas program.

Throughout two centuries of American history, the Susquehanna Gateway region has played a starring role in the development of our nation's political, cultural and economic identity. Our people have advanced the cause of freedom and shared their agricultural bounty and industrial ingenuity with the world. Our town and country landscapes and natural wonders are visited and treasured by people from across the globe. The Susquehanna River has served the nation as a

major fishery, transportation corridor, power generator and, most recently, as an outdoor recreation venue. Our people, land and waterways are essential parts of the national story - qualities that exemplify the National Park Service's definition of a National Heritage Area.

The Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area, originally known as the Lancaster-York Heritage Region, has been designated as a Pennsylvania Heritage Area since 2001. The Susquehanna Heritage Corporation serves as the heritage area's Management Entity and has a nine-year track record of successful heritage development activities, particularly along the historic Susquehanna River corridor, located at the center of the region. We have attracted substantial state and local public and private funding support that will more than match potential federal funding and we have developed a Strategic Plan with a primary focus on creating an economically vital heritage and outdoor tourism asset based on the Susquehanna River.



The Susquehanna River lies at the heart of the proposed National Heritage Area.

Designation as a National Heritage Area is an important step in advancing heritage development initiatives for the region. National recognition will boost visibility and visitation, bring critical technical assistance and support to the region, and further highlight and promote the majestic Susquehanna River - its scenic and fragile river lands, its historic and vibrant river towns, and its special significance to the heritage and health of the Chesapeake Bay.

National Park Service Endorsement of Our Region's National Significance

In 2008, our organization conducted a public involvement and planning process that resulted in submittal of a *National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Report* to the National Park Service (NPS) documenting our region's qualifications for national designation.

After NPS staff review of the report, **in September 2008 NPS Northeast Region Director Dennis E. Reidenbach determined that our region "meets the criteria contained in the *National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines* for potential Congressional designation as the Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area,"** and further stated that the region, "with its strategic location along the Susquehanna River, colonial history, rich Amish cultural traditions, and agricultural heritage, clearly has nationally important resources and stories to share."

Commenting on our organization's qualifications to manage the proposed National Heritage Area, Mr. Reidenbach said "as a valued NPS partner through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and partner in a new National Recreation Trail, you have demonstrated your ability to build partnerships, attract visitors and bring new recognition to the region. Increasing your focus on the lower Susquehanna River presents new opportunities to strengthen the unity, vibrancy and identity of the region and the Chesapeake watershed."



As recognized by the Park Service, our organization is ready to serve as the Management Entity for the Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area. We operate from The John and Kathryn

Zimmerman Center for Heritage at Historic Pleasant Garden, an 18th century dwelling on the shores of the Susquehanna River, right at the heart of the region. We are governed by a regional civic leadership Board of Directors that provides strategic policy direction and oversight to our work. Our Advisory Council includes almost thirty regional agencies, organizations, associations, institutions and businesses that also provide support and guidance. Our programs and projects have included partnerships with many other regional organizations, as well as local, state and national agencies. National designation will further enhance our ability to preserve, protect and celebrate our area's significant heritage resources and stories.

We are pleased to have National Park Service endorsement of our region's qualifications for National Heritage Area designation and our place in America's story – and it is quite a story.

An Overview of Our Region's Rich National Heritage

The proposed Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area is a rich showcase for Pennsylvania's long and distinguished role in the development of the United States, and possesses a nationally distinctive landscape that contributes to our national heritage.

The identity of our region, particularly Lancaster County, is strongly associated with the Plain People, more commonly known as the Amish and Mennonite communities. We are home to America's oldest and most densely populated Amish settlement. Their aversion to modern conveniences and ability to continue traditional ways in the face of tremendous external change and pressure has piqued national and international interest for much of the past century.



The region's Plain communities create a unique cultural identity for the region.

Our region is a striking example of William Penn's doctrine of religious freedom, upon which Pennsylvania was founded. Attracted by the prospect of a life without religious persecution, European immigrants - English, Irish, Germans, Scots - settled in the region, bringing an assortment of faiths. By the time of the American Revolution, Pennsylvania was one of the largest colonies, with highly cosmopolitan communities. Some call our region the first American melting pot. At one time the edge of the frontier, the region was also a major outpost for those moving west.

The area's prominent role during the Revolutionary War also exemplifies its contribution to American freedom. Fleeing Philadelphia in 1777, the Second Continental Congress convened in York for nine months, using the river as a barrier from the British. In York, the revolutionary government debated and adopted the Articles of Confederation - "America's first Constitution."

The region's story of freedom extends to that of African-Americans fleeing slavery. A predominance of anti-slavery sentiment and proximity to the Mason-Dixon Line helped make the area a significant part of the national Underground Railroad network and home to national leaders in the debate over African American Freedom.

Agriculture is among the most distinct aspects of the Susquehanna Gateway region. For centuries the area has been a breadbasket for the nation, and its patchwork of cropland is a defining feature

of the landscape. The region's farms are also a backbone of the state's economy. From subsistence farming by Native Americans, to traditional cultivation by the Plain People, to modern food production, the region possesses rich stories of agriculture's past, present and future.

In addition to agri-business, for centuries the region has been a center for a large and highly diverse collection of manufacturing businesses - local and international, small and large, new and old. This tradition of design, production and innovation continues. Some examples of the goods currently produced in the region are: motorcycles, barbells, coffins, paper, pottery, tanks, furniture, wallpaper, violins, tapestries, dental prosthetics, hydraulic turbines, and cigars. The transporting of goods, which was critical to the growth of agriculture and manufacturing, also made the region a center for innovation. From the Conestoga wagon to the first iron steamboat to the first coal-burning steam locomotive, the area has a rich history of transportation ingenuity.

Why the Susquehanna Gateway Region Merits National Designation

The research and planning process for development of a *Statement of National Significance* for the proposed Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area produced major themes that document the region's significant place in the national story. These themes reflect events and movements that truly represent the American experience. The region's significance is also reflected in its many natural and historic resources, including one National Natural Landmark, five National Historic Landmarks, and 329 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The region's national heritage themes derive from the central role that the Susquehanna River, one of the oldest river systems in the world, has played in the history of the area. The four-hundred-and-fifty-mile-long river, the longest on the East Coast, flows southeast through the heart of the Susquehanna Gateway region before it enters the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. Throughout the region's history, the Susquehanna has been a unifying element. The natural abundance of animal and plant life here long attracted Native Americans, followed by European settlers who transformed the landscape from woodlands into farms and small towns. The later discovery of coal in the river's higher reaches, as well as an industrial boom in Lancaster and York Counties, increased commercial traffic on the river. Ever since the eighteenth century, both industry and agriculture have coexisted here.



The Susquehanna defines the geography and has shaped the culture of the region.

In the American mind, the area is synonymous with Amish culture, and the beautiful rural landscape they created that still exists in large parts of the region. Today, those scenic qualities attract visitors from throughout the United States and around the world.

Although agriculture still represents a significant part of the area's economy, the industrial base has declined while recreation and natural areas have grown. The proposed Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area, then, has experienced a cycle in which local values regarding the uses of the landscape have changed from predominantly agricultural to markedly industrial,

and more recently to a focus on the natural and historical environment. National Heritage Area designation will help preserve this nationally important and unique landscape.

The four major interpretive themes developed for the Susquehanna Gateway region are therefore focused on the Susquehanna River as a national corridor of culture and commerce, the area's roles as a gateway to settlement of America's frontier and capital of the new nation during the Revolutionary War, the Amish, and the region's place in the cause of African American freedom.

The Susquehanna River as a Corridor of Culture and Commerce

Long before European settlers first explored the Susquehanna River, Native Americans lived here. They left traces of their lives in rock art at several petroglyph sites as well as in archaeological remains at town sites and other locations. Almost 2,900 archaeological sites have been recorded in the Lower Susquehanna River basin, about half of which lie within the Susquehanna Gateway region with several listed on the National Register of Historic Places. When Captain John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay in 1608, he journeyed up the Susquehanna and formed a trading alliance with Native Americans, opening a trade network extending from the bay to the Great Lakes.



Native Americans lived in stockade villages at various sites along the river.

The natural abundance and richness of the Susquehanna that was so attractive to native peoples eventually drew European settlers as well. After William Penn received his grant in 1681 and began settling his colony, the Susquehanna's fertile valley lured European farmers, hunters, and merchants. The first of these settlers arrived in the region - at that time America's frontier - about 1710.

Under Penn's leadership, the region was the locus of a unique relationship with the area's original residents. About 1684, Penn reserved land on the east bank of the Susquehanna as a refuge for the Susquehannock and other native peoples who had been displaced. Known as Conestoga Indian Town, the site became an important place for treaty making between 1696 and 1762. Benjamin Franklin printed transcripts of treaty sessions and a pamphlet denouncing the infamous massacre of the Conestoga Indians in 1763.

The Susquehanna River served the colonists from the beginning as an important commercial highway to the Chesapeake Bay. Indian paths here were transformed into roads, one of the most important being the Great Wagon Road from Philadelphia westward to the frontier. In the 19th century, canals and railroads enabled farmers and entrepreneurs in the area to ship agricultural and industrial products east and west to remote markets. Robert Fulton, inventor of the first commercially successful steamboat, was born in Lancaster County in 1765 and his birthplace is a National Historic Landmark. York County's John Elgar constructed the first iron steamboat in America and launched it on the Susquehanna in 1825. In 1831, York Countian Phineas Davis designed and built the first practical coal-burning steam locomotive, revolutionizing railroad transportation. A York foundry constructed both Elgar's steamboat and Davis's locomotive.

Throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century, rafts and canal boats floated down the river to the Chesapeake, transporting lumber, iron, and other products to the wider world. In the river's towns and hamlets, craftsmen and industrialists established workshops and factories that made many of these products. In the 20th century, as both industry and river shipping declined, hydroelectric dams were constructed to provide power. The dams also created recreation areas that made the river a place for diverse outdoor activities, especially boating and fishing.

From a wilderness area to a rural landscape to an industrial environment to a recreational haven, the river has undergone significant changes over the centuries that are representative of similar trends on rivers across the nation. The story of the Susquehanna River therefore reflects the American experience, including Native American culture, European settlement, the alteration of the landscape to rural farmland, the construction of towns, the rise and decline of industries, and changes in the use of the river from exploitation and commerce to recreation and conservation.

The Amish Identity in the American Mind

Because Pennsylvania was established as a refuge for immigrants of all religious persuasions, other denominations quickly followed the founding Quakers to the colony. Among early settlers were Germans that included ancestors of what are today called Amish, Mennonites, and others - the "Plain People." Pacifistic and spurning modern technology and most worldly things, the Plain People are generally lumped together as "The Amish" in the popular American imagination. Their religious values, "simple" way of life, and well-tended farms speak to the deepest feelings that Americans have about ourselves and our national experience: that virtuous, hardworking, humble people can carve from the wilderness a way of life that is respectful of the natural world and of their fellow human beings. The Amish seem to personify the virtues of faith, honesty, community, and stewardship - perceptions that may be based more on myth than reality but still constitute the heart of our national image and how we see ourselves when we are at our best.



Well-kept Amish farmsteads in the region exemplify American ideals about farming and rural ways of life.

The German settlers arriving along the Susquehanna in the 1710s cleared farmsteads and made a landscape that today appears to have been little altered. In reality, the area is vastly different now in many ways, from paved roads to electric lighting to the residential and commercial development. Within the rural areas, however, the hand-built houses, barns, and other structures, the sizes and patterns of fields and woodlots, the varieties of crops achievable with horse-drawn plows, and the farming methods used have created a landscape that is unique in America.

Elsewhere in America, commercial farming and mechanization epitomize the term "agribusiness." In the Susquehanna Gateway region, however, the ancient ideal of the family farm of manageable size seems to have been achieved and sustained. Whether or not the landscape created and maintained by the Plain People can accurately be regarded as typical of the 18th or 19th centuries, it clearly is not of the present. To most Americans, it looks like the rural landscape of our dreams: farmland as it ought to be, the Jeffersonian ideal brought to life.

Today, the Amish and other Plain People of the region are also frequently the subject of considerable sentimentalism, commercial exploitation, and intrusive curiosity. Nostalgic longing for an imagined “simpler” past, ignorance of the dangerous and often backbreaking labor associated with farming, willingness on the part of some to substitute the imitation for the authentic for the sake of profit, and the environmental impact of countless gawkers threaten the very thing that people come to see. Commercialism especially endangers the landscape.

A balance must be maintained between sustaining the rural environment that visitors want to experience and the fact that the community of Plain People is a living, changing one. Some of the people are moving from Lancaster County across the river into York and other parts of Pennsylvania, pressured to do so because their population is growing and farms can only be subdivided to a certain point before they become too small to be economically feasible.

Many Amish are involved in enterprises other than agriculture: operating or working in restaurants, baking and canning foods for sale, engaging in quilting and other crafts, and constructing wooden garden furniture and playhouses. Although these “nontraditional” and unromantic occupations may disillusion some visitors, such activities help offset the economic uncertainty of farming and enable the Plain People to sustain their more traditional ways of life, preserving the rural landscape for which they have become known throughout the world.

The Plain People are not unique to this region, but the landscape they have created here is of a scale and scope that is rare if not entirely unknown elsewhere in America. The people and their landscape well represent the national story of American agriculture and the way it has transformed the natural environment.

Gateway to the Frontier

Close on the heels of Pennsylvania’s early English and German settlers came Scots-Irish immigrants who moved west to the backcountry in the 1720s. Many settled in western Lancaster County, where they buffered the eastern settlements from the Indians farther west. The Great Wagon Road, on which the Scots-Irish and other immigrants journeyed west from Philadelphia, passed through Lancaster and York, then turned south at the Appalachian Mountains and led to the backcountry of Virginia and the Carolinas. By the mid-18th century, it was one of the busiest highways in the colonies as immigrants from the Susquehanna Gateway region trekked south through the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. They and their descendants populated not only the frontier farther south in the Carolinas but also the Appalachian Mountains to the west.

These emigrants from the Susquehanna Gateway region took with them two local innovations that attained national renown: the Conestoga wagon and the Pennsylvania-Kentucky rifle. The origins of both are murky, but the wagon was developed as early as 1716 and was named for the Lancaster County area where it was created. Built like a small boat, it could transport large cargoes without shifting, thanks to the wagon’s sloping sides and ends. At first the wagons were used to transport



The Conestoga wagon changed American commerce.

produce and goods locally, but they soon were adopted for long-range freight shipping and proved vital to the transport of supplies into the backcountry well into the 19th century.

The long rifle was developed by Pennsylvania German gunsmiths in the Susquehanna Gateway region by the 1740s. Gunsmiths from Pennsylvania through Virginia to North Carolina were soon producing them as settlers migrated south. Because of their widespread popularity in Kentucky, the firearms later became commonly known as Kentucky rifles.

The emigrants also took with them the vernacular architecture that was their common heritage—especially the log dwelling, the stone house, and the bank barn—and transformed the backcountry as they had the Susquehanna region. Their influence is obvious in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley, which owes them much of its built environment and landscape, and spread into the backcountry of the Carolinas, the Appalachians, and beyond, eventually carrying their cultural influence and independent spirit throughout America.

The Susquehanna Gateway region was a nationally significant gateway to the settlement of the ever-moving frontier. In the early 18th century, the people developed a vernacular architecture, a host of useful and innovative tools for survival and growth, and a sustainable system of farming that transformed the landscape here. When subsequent generations emigrated to the west and south, they took with them their methods of construction, their wagons and rifles, and their agricultural techniques to likewise transform much of the rest of the country.

Revolutionary Turning Point

During the Revolutionary War, the Susquehanna Gateway region became the seat of government for the Continental Congress, the new nation’s executive body, at a crucial time in the conflict. After meeting first in Philadelphia, then Baltimore, and then Philadelphia again, the Continental Congress fled to the Pennsylvania frontier in September 1777, where the Susquehanna River provided a natural barrier to the British Army. The British compelled Congress to flee when their army occupied Philadelphia after defeating George Washington’s troops in the Battle of Brandywine. Congress convened for a day in Lancaster, then moved west across the river to York, where it remained until June 1778 when it returned to Philadelphia. While in York, Congress achieved a major objective of national significance – adoption of the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, the “first constitution” of the United States of America. Originally presented to Congress for consideration in 1776, Congress approved the Articles in November 1777 while holding its sessions in the York County courthouse and sent copies to the states for ratification, which was completed in 1781.



America’s first constitution was adopted in York in 1777.

While Congress concluded debate on the Articles at York, Washington’s army suffered defeat at Germantown and American general Horatio Gates forced General John Burgoyne’s British army to surrender at Saratoga. Washington and his army huddled for the winter of 1777-1778 at Valley Forge. In February 1778, France and America signed treaties of alliance that the Congress at York ratified in May. Thomas Paine buoyed American spirits when he published *The American Crisis*,

Number V, in March 1778, in Lancaster, and his letter “To the People of America,” appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in June when the newspaper was published in York. With the British evacuation of Philadelphia in June, Washington fought them to a draw at Monmouth, New Jersey and Congress moved back to Philadelphia.

Later, in 1781, as the colonies neared success in the struggle for independence, an American prisoner-of-war camp was established near York in 1781. Known as Camp Security, the facility operated until 1783 and housed British soldiers who had surrendered at Saratoga. One of the few remaining revolutionary prisoner-of-war sites surviving in the United States, Camp Security is threatened by development. The American Battlefield Protection Program, in its 2007 *Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States*, listed Camp Security as a highly threatened and important site.

The Susquehanna Gateway region is one of only four locations to serve as the capital of the United States during the struggle for independence. There, during its meetings in York, the Continental Congress completed its debates on the Articles of Confederation and disseminated it to the states for ratification. The region is therefore nationally significant as the birth site of the new nation’s first governing document. In addition, it was while Congress was in York that the victory at Saratoga occurred, the Continental Army matured at Valley Forge, and France entered the war as an American ally. This often-overlooked moment of American history at York was when the young nation turned a critical corner on the road to independence.

The Cause of African American Freedom

Two additional Susquehanna Gateway stories contribute to the region’s national significance: the area’s part in the Underground Railroad and the role that two local residents played as national leaders - James Buchanan and Thaddeus Stevens.

Pennsylvanians, especially Quakers and Plain People, were instrumental in development of the Underground Railroad. Those escaping slavery arrived by boat, traveling secretly up the Susquehanna River, or on foot. They found many residents, both black and white, eager to help. Fugitive slave laws passed by Congress in 1793 and with the Compromise of 1850 enraged Northerners who opposed slavery. They saw the act as



The Underground Railroad is part of our story.

a violation of states’ rights and the principles of liberty. When legislative appeals and litigation failed, some antislavery advocates resorted to direct action, hiding fugitives, breaking into jails to free them, and even resisting with violence.

An episode in eastern Lancaster County in September 1851, was one of the deadliest instances of violent resistance to slavery and provoked a national outcry. It began when “slave-catchers” surrounded the house of a black man near Christiana. The group included a Maryland slaveholder who failed to identify the man as the fugitive being sought. Armed local residents soon surrounded the group, shots were fired, the slaveholder was killed and his son and several others were wounded. More than two dozen black and white men and women were later

arrested, charged with treason for interfering with the application of the law, tried in Christiana, and acquitted. The Christiana resistance became a national cause célèbre.

Two national leaders in the Slavery debates of the 1850s-1860s were Lancaster residents James Buchanan and Thaddeus Stevens. Buchanan, United States President from 1857 to 1861, was regarded as a Northern man with Southern sympathies who supported slaveholders' rights and despised abolitionists. He also thought secession was illegal, along with using military power to stop it. Although most historians conclude that his presidency was a failure for not stopping the slide toward secession, it is unclear what he could have done to prevent it. After Buchanan left office, he returned to Wheatland, his home in Lancaster, where he became the first former president to write his memoirs. Wheatland is now a designated National Historic Landmark.

Thaddeus Stevens, born in Vermont, settled in Lancaster in 1815. He served in Congress from 1849 to 1853 and from 1859 until his 1868 death. Ardently antislavery in his convictions, Stevens was active in the Underground Railroad and became a leader of the "Radical Republicans" during the Civil War. He advocated total war against the south, was an architect of Reconstruction and the Constitution's 14th Amendment, and helped lead the impeachment movement against President Andrew Johnson in 1868. After Stevens died in 1868, his body lay in state in the Capitol and was buried in a Lancaster cemetery chosen because it was not "limited as to race." His house and law office in Lancaster are being restored as a museum complex.

Community Support for Sharing Our Nationally-Significant Stories

Beyond our region's compelling stories of national significance, to be considered as a National Heritage Area the National Park Service also says that "...a strong base of local, grassroots support is essential...with the visible involvement and commitment of key constituencies." Public participation has been crucial to the success of the Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area. We have demonstrated that strategic engagement of the public is the most effective means of raising awareness about the heritage area's mission and goals and building a broad base of support.

Our successful record of public involvement is reflected in strong community support for designation of the region as a National Heritage Area, with a broad cross-section of regional constituencies providing statements of support for national designation in our *Feasibility Study Report*. These include: our Board of Directors, made up of regional business, government and civic leaders; the Lancaster and York County Boards of Commissioners, representing bi-partisan regional political leadership; and our Advisory Council, representing historical societies and museums, historic preservation and land conservation trusts, downtown revitalization groups, convention and visitors bureaus, planning commissions, parks departments, chambers of commerce and hospitality businesses. These endorsements reach beyond those signing the statements, bridging to thousands of residents and hundreds of businesses that their organizations represent across the heritage area.

We also planned and conducted community meetings to garner input about national designation from our strong regional partnership network, including residents, government, community groups, non-profits and private businesses. These well-attended gatherings helped us look at the heritage area through the lens of national significance, define the region's unique national stories, identify significant assets and demonstrate local support for national designation. The

contributions received at the meetings proved to be of tremendous value to the overall process and produced a clear consensus that National Heritage Area designation has strong public support and is the right approach for our region.

The boundaries of the proposed National Heritage Area, which include all of Lancaster and York Counties with the Susquehanna River corridor at the center, also received strong support from participants at the community meetings conducted to discuss the region's potential national designation.



The proposed National Heritage Area includes Lancaster and York Counties and the Susquehanna River corridor.

Why National Heritage Area Designation is Important for Our Region

Building on our success as a state heritage area, national designation will help expand our activities to a larger, national audience and make our stories and resources part of the National Park Service interpretive and marketing network. Support for heritage area programs - and the recognition that comes with national designation - will elevate the status of our region and identify the area as a place for visitors to experience rich and authentic national history.

As a National Heritage Area, the many cultural, historic and natural resource organizations in the region will also be eligible for additional technical assistance and grants, providing much-needed support for historic resource conservation, interpretation, education, planning and recreational development. Such support will help regional partners invest in new interpretive initiatives focused on our nationally significant stories, ensuring that the region's impact and influence on the nation is shared with residents and visitors more effectively. Most significantly, these new resources will help reduce the risk of nationally significant resources being degraded or lost.

National designation will also help create an economically vital heritage and outdoor tourism asset based on the Susquehanna River by boosting visibility and visitation and bringing new technical assistance and support to the area through the National Park Service. This will enhance economic development activity centered on heritage and outdoor tourism and help the river corridor reach its true potential as a place for national learning and recreation.

As a National Heritage Area, the region will also have greater ability to strengthen its powerful network of partnerships, raise and distribute funds, and otherwise work to implement heritage development goals. For its part, the National Park Service will receive extensive leverage for its investment in our work by embracing and incorporating into its national system an established, successful heritage area with nationally significant stories and resources that will enhance the offerings currently available in existing national parks and heritage areas.

Our Newest Place in the American Story – A Treasured Landscape of the Chesapeake Bay

The Susquehanna Gateway region is poised to play a new role in the national story. In May 2009, President Obama issued Executive Order 13508 on Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration.

This first-ever presidential directive on the bay called the Chesapeake a “national treasure” and proposed an enhanced federal role “to protect and restore the health, heritage, natural resources, and social and economic value of the nation’s largest estuarine ecosystem.” The Executive Order established a Federal Leadership Committee for the Chesapeake Bay that just last week, on May 12, 2010, released its *Strategy for Protecting and Restoring the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*, a nationally coordinated effort to save the environment and landscapes of the bay and its watershed.

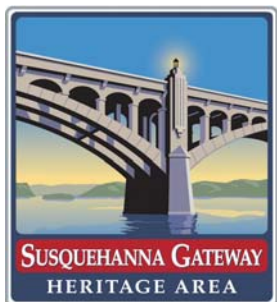
The Chesapeake Bay Strategy proposes a new initiative by the National Park Service to conserve treasured landscapes of the bay watershed through partnership areas - broad, collaborative conservation efforts in priority landscapes. The National Heritage Area model provides a proven approach for doing just that, and the Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area Act provides ready-made legislation for jump-starting this important initiative in one of the bay watershed’s most historically and environmentally significant landscapes.

National Heritage Area designation of the Susquehanna Gateway region - including our reach of the bay’s largest tributary - will significantly enhance recognition of the Susquehanna’s important relationship to the Chesapeake. National recognition of our region – much of it the scenic, recreational and historical equivalent of a National Park only 90 minutes from where we sit today - will provide new resources for protecting the river’s natural and cultural landscape. It will help raise public awareness of the need to improve river and bay environmental quality and preserve their natural and cultural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations.

Launching the Chesapeake Strategy with designation of America’s newest National Heritage Area along the bay’s greatest river will signal a commitment to this new national initiative.

In Closing

Thank you again for this opportunity to share our region’s national significance with the Subcommittee. We ask for your support and advocacy for the Susquehanna Gateway National Heritage Area Act. Those of us in the region know that our home and our people have played a special place in America’s story, and we are ready to join Congress, the National Park Service, and the rest of the National Heritage Area Network in sharing our stories with the nation. I welcome any questions that you and your colleagues may have.



For more information, please contact:

Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area
1706 Long Level Road
Wrightsville, PA 17368
717-252-0229
info@susquehannaheritage.org
www.SusquehannaHeritage.org