

STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE TOOTHMAN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING S. 1151, A BILL TO REAUTHORIZE AMERICA'S AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP IN THE STATE OF IOWA.

July 31, 2013

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1151, a bill to reauthorize the America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership in the State of Iowa.

The Department recognizes the important work of the America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership, better known as the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area, in northeast Iowa. We recommend that S. 1151 be amended to authorize an extension for heritage area program funding until Congress has had time to consider the recently completed evaluation and report on the accomplishments of the heritage area and the future role of the National Park Service that was recently transmitted to Congress this past month; and until heritage area program legislation is enacted that standardizes timeframes and funding for designated national heritage areas. Consistent with congressional directives in the 2009 and 2010 Interior Appropriations Acts, the Administration proposed, in the FY 2014 budget, focusing most national heritage area grants on recently authorized areas. The Department would like to work with Congress to determine the future federal role when heritage areas reach the end of their authorized eligibility for heritage program funding. We recommend that Congress enact national heritage area legislation during this Congress.

There are currently 49 designated national heritage areas, yet there is no authority in law that guides the designation and administration of these areas. Program legislation would provide a much-needed framework for evaluating proposed national heritage areas, offering guidelines for successful planning and management, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties, and standardizing timeframes and funding for designated areas.

The Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area was established in 1996 by Public Law 103-333 to interpret farm life, agribusiness and rural communities, past and present. It preserves and tells the story of American agriculture and its global significance through partnerships and activities that celebrate the land, people, and communities of the area. The heart of America's agricultural revolution still exists in the region, and the national heritage area is telling the breadth and scope of this story in a compelling, meaningful way.

The heritage of American agriculture and its influence on the global agricultural revolution was considered to be nationally distinctive and met the criteria for national heritage area designation. American agriculture is one of the primary sources of this country's wealth and world leadership and should be preserved and interpreted. The Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area preserves and interprets a rich cultural landscape that includes family farms, historic industrial architecture, and rural communities across a 37-county region in northeast Iowa covering over

20,000 square miles. This broad agrarian landscape is rare in today's pattern of urban and suburban expanding into rural areas.

The national heritage area is managed by the America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership (Partnership), this local coordinating entity facilitates public private partnerships for the preservation and interpretation of heritage resources. The Partnership's work focuses on regional initiatives for heritage programming, interpretation and education, preservation and resource stewardship, heritage development and infrastructure, and planning and design.

During its 16 years of existence, the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area has a significant record of achievement. It has worked closely with the regional business community, county and state governments, and multiple non-governmental organizations to build a network of partner sites dedicated to preserving and interpreting the past, present, and future of America's agricultural story. Working together, the network has developed a successful public information and way-finding program for promoting tourism that welcomes visitors along the major highway corridors surrounding the region and identifies the more than 100 partner sites in the heritage area. The new signs serve as a connecting thread for this network of sites, while letting visitors know they can discover a piece of America's agricultural story being preserved at the site. This way-finding program has not only helped visitors find tourism destinations within the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area, but has also helped the heritage area develop a regional identity.

The bedrock of the National Heritage Area concept has always been building partnerships for achieving goals. The Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area, with minimal government funding assistance since its establishment, has shown significant success in working with partners and the federal government to preserve, interpret, and promote the significant resources of northeast Iowa. Since its establishment, the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area has received almost \$9.5 million in federal funding, and every federal dollar has been matched at least once with non-federal funds.

S. 1151, as is written now, would extend the authorization for federal funding for the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area for an additional 10 years. The Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area is one of the nine heritage areas evaluated by the National Park Service pursuant to Public Law 110-229. The completed evaluation for the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area was recently transmitted to Congress this past month, and included recommendations on the future role of the National Park Service in the area.

We recommend a technical amendment to the long title of the bill to make it clear that the bill would extend the authorization for federal funding for the heritage area instead of reauthorizing the heritage area. While the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area faces a sunset for its federal funding, its national heritage area designation will not sunset.

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