

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. 4222, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE ST. CROIX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA.

SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

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. 4222, a bill to establish the St. Croix National Heritage Area.

The Department supports S. 4222.

S. 4222 would establish the St. Croix National Heritage Area for the purpose of preserving, promoting, and interpreting an assemblage of authentic natural, cultural, historic, and scenic features that celebrate the heritage of the inhabitants of the island of St Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The text of S. 4222 is consistent with the standard language typically used in national heritage area establishment legislation.

St. Croix lies at a geographic crossroads, connecting the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean currents with the westerlies and easterly prevailing trade winds. This location, along with the fertility of the island and the productivity of its surrounding waters, has attracted and sustained people from around the world. St. Croix became a collage of cultures due to the long-standing exchange of traditions, customs, and beliefs between Amerindians, Africans, West Indians, South Americans, and Europeans. Today, the people of St. Croix embrace their unique cultural mix, coexisting in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation. If designated, this would be the first national heritage area in a U.S. territory.

The National Park Service conducted a feasibility study of the proposed national heritage area pursuant to P.L. 109-338, which was transmitted to Congress in 2011. The study found that the area met the National Park Service's criteria for establishment of a national heritage area.

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