



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

7/13/20

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman, Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

I hereby transmit the enclosed Northern Neck National Heritage Area Feasibility Study. The study was conducted pursuant to Public Law 111-11, which directed the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with appropriate state historic preservation offices, state historical societies, and other appropriate organizations, to conduct a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating the study area as the Northern Neck National Heritage Area (NHA) in Virginia. The legislation also required consultation with the Governor and concurrence of the study findings by all federal land managers located within the study area. The study was conducted by the National Park Service (NPS).

Located in northeastern Virginia, the Northern Neck study area includes five counties found between the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers: King George, Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland. The Northern Neck peninsula extends 70 miles into the Chesapeake Bay and is only 20 miles across at its widest point. This area has historically been defined by its waterways, rural setting, and connections to several early American political leaders as the “birthplace of presidents”.

The NPS evaluated the study area according to the NPS *National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines* (2003). The guidelines provide a step-by-step process to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of NHA designation according to ten criteria. These criteria are used to assess an area’s heritage resources, identify if opportunities exist to conserve and better understand those resources, and determine if there is public support and commitment to manage a potential heritage area.

NPS initiated the study in 2009 through public meetings with stakeholders, including the proposed management entity of the potential NHA – the Northern Neck Tourism Commission. Additional meetings and workshops were held and NPS shared both a draft and revised study for interagency review, as directed by the study legislation. Based on substantive input from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and other stakeholders, the final study addresses how each of the ten criteria are met.

The NPS identified a nationally significant story with several themes, continuing local traditions, and a strategic assemblage of associated natural and historic resources. These resources retain sufficient integrity and opportunities for public engagement and could constitute an NHA. In addition, the potential coordinating entity was found to be ready and capable of managing an NHA if one was created.

In conclusion, the area was found to meet all ten evaluation criteria to be eligible for designation as a national heritage area.

Thank you for your interest in the National Park Service. A similar letter is being sent to the Honorable Joe Manchin III, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; the Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives; and the Honorable Rob Bishop, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives. The affected members of the Virginia delegation will also receive a copy of the report and this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Vela". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "D" at the beginning.

David Vela
Deputy Director, Operations
Exercising the Authority of the Director

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Robert J. Wittman
The Honorable Mark Warner
The Honorable Timothy Kaine