



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

APR 12 2013

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to Public Law 110-229, I am pleased to transmit the *Augusta Canal National Heritage Area Evaluation Findings* (Augusta Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged the Center for Park Management as the consultant and Westat as the evaluator in order to independently assess the progress, analyze the investments, and identify the critical components for sustainability of the national heritage area. Based on the findings of the Augusta Evaluation, and as required by Section 462(c) of Public Law 110-229, the NPS recommends a future role with Augusta Canal National Heritage Area.

The Augusta Canal National Heritage Area (ACNHA) encompasses 11 miles of canal corridor along the Savannah River in eastern Georgia and received designation in 1996 to recognize the national importance of the only intact industrial canal in the American South in continuous use since its construction in 1845. The heritage area encompasses the Historic Augusta Canal and Industrial District, a national historic landmark, which includes the Confederate States Powder Works, a 28-building complex that stretches along the canal for two miles, Lombard Ironworks and massive industrial revolution era mills that are once again in productive use. The canal consists of three levels with both natural and man-made features such as canal locks and gates and recreational areas including trails, blueways, and greenways.

A source of power, water, and transportation, the Augusta Canal was one of the few successful industrial canals in the American South. By the mid-20th century, the canal entered a significant period of neglect as textile factories closed. In 1989, the Georgia State Legislature created the Augusta Canal Authority (Authority). The goals of the Authority's 1993 Augusta Canal Master Plan were included in the federal designation of the heritage area, and served as the impetus for the Management Plan approved by the Secretary of the Interior in 2000. The Authority is the designated coordinating entity for the heritage area with the mission to retain, enhance, and interpret the canal as a source of transportation, hydropower, and water, as well as a catalyst for the industrial revolution in the South. The Authority maintains partnerships with a variety of private and public stakeholders including the City of Augusta since the canal is both the principal source of drinking water and a flood-control structure. Its relationships with the city's Utilities

and Public Works departments are an important aspect of resource protection. NPS provides assistance to ACNHA through the Southeast Regional office in Atlanta.

In the 21st century, the Augusta Canal is once again a source of pride and potential for its community. The Enterprise Mill, revived as an office and residential complex after years of neglect, now houses the ACNHA Interpretive Center. Its exhibits and artifacts depict canal construction and mill life and remind residents and visitors of the progress, problems, and promise of the canal. In addition to restoring the canal and adjoining properties, the Authority has restored hydropower for the community. The hydro-electric plants not only bring the heritage of the canal to life, but also provide a source of ongoing income for the ACNHA.

The work of ACNHA contributes to the mission of the NPS. Both the NPS funding and the national heritage area designation have been of value to the Authority and ACNHA. The funding has provided financial flexibility, the ability to leverage other resources, and provided reliable support for its activities. As noted in the attached findings document, between 1998 and 2009 ACNHA received \$5,212,985 in NPS federal assistance funding which was matched with \$21.2 million from non-federal sources, far exceeding the requirement for annual matching contributions.

The Authority's funds come from a variety of sources including an \$8 million bond, a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, funds from generating hydropower at the restored mills, and water revenue. Other funding sources include grants for capital projects from the state and local government as well as earned income from the interpretive center and tours. Other federal sources include funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation. ACNHA's cumulative NPS federal assistance funding remains below the authorized amount of \$15 million.

If the NPS funding is discontinued progress will be slowed and some activities may cease. However, the basic structure of the Authority would likely remain the same if the other sources of funding (water, hydropower, tax revenue, fees and sales) continue. One of the vulnerabilities is the fluctuation in water revenues and hydropower sales that hamper the ACNHA's ability to project the amount of funds available from year to year.

ACNHA is fulfilling its legislative mandate. Based on the positive results of the Augusta Evaluation, the NPS recommends a future role with the ACNHA. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exists for NPS involvement in supporting the heritage area. Options for future NPS involvement may include: providing financial and technical assistance, coordinating training, providing operational guidance, partnering with national parks for events and programming, consulting on preservation and conservation, and consulting on area plans and projects.

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives; and the Honorable Edward Markey, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Jacobson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rachel Jacobson
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
The Honorable Johnny Isakson
The Honorable Tom Graves
The Honorable John Barrow



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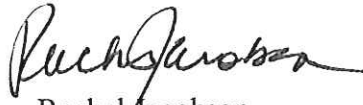
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ACNHA is fulfilling its legislative mandate. Based on the positive results of the Augusta Evaluation the NPS recommends a future role with the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exists for NPS involvement in supporting the heritage area. Options for future NPS involvement may include: providing financial and technical assistance, coordinating training, providing operational guidance, partnering with national parks for events and programming, consulting on preservation and conservation, and consulting on area plans and projects.

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Sincerely,

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Rachel Jacobson
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Saxby Chambliss
The Honorable Johnny Isakson
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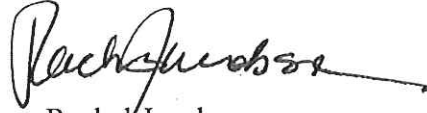
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