



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

SEP 07 2017

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

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

I am pleased to transmit the National Aviation Heritage Area (NAHA) Evaluation Findings (Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged Westat as the evaluator to independently assess the progress, analyze the investments, and identify the critical components for sustainability of the national heritage area per evaluation questions in Public Law 110-229. Based on the findings of the Evaluation, the NPS recommends a future role with the NAHA. The NPS will continue to work with the NAHA to implement business, fundraising, and financial resource plans and continue to form networks of operational and financial partnerships to further sustainability of the NAHA operations.

In 2004, Congress designated the NAHA to highlight the history and legacy of the Wright Brothers, the role of Dayton in aviation development, to celebrate the aviation and aeronautics industry, as well as the social and cultural legacies of these industries. The NAHA includes eight counties in southwestern Ohio: Montgomery, Greene, Warren, Miami, Clark, Champaign, Shelby, and Auglaize. Key aspects of the heritage include the historic resources related to aviation and aerospace including Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, thirteen sites on the National Register of Historic Places related to aviation and two cultural landscape sites: Huffman Prairie Flying Field and Grimes Flying Field. The coordinating entity is the National Aviation Heritage Alliance (NAH Alliance) a 501(c)(3) headquartered in Dayton, Ohio.

The Evaluation determined that the NAH Alliance has addressed the legislated purpose of encouraging and facilitating collaboration to promote heritage tourism, consistent with the management plan, through the federal resources provided. Both the NPS funds and the National Heritage Area designation are of value to the NAHA. The NAH Alliance successfully met the 50 percent federal funding match requirements from 2005 to 2015, with more than \$3.7 million in cash matched with \$2.8 million in NPS Heritage Partnership Program dollars.

The NAHA's management plan objectives are to position area aviation assets as destinations, to inspire the next generation of industrial and cultural leaders, and to create cooperation and connectivity through promotion and tourism, preservation and development of historic and cultural resources, education, economic development and community revitalization, and

sustainable stewardship. Visitation to partner sites has increased from 1.1 million in 2006 to 2.2 million in 2013 through increased promotion, signage, marketing, and providing visitors with a cohesive experience.

The redevelopment of the Wright Company Factory Site (WCFS) represents a focus of developing historic and cultural resources and economic development and community revitalization. The NAH Alliance leads environmental cleanup through a \$3 million grant from the Clean Ohio Fund for brownfield revitalization. It secured funds from the City of Dayton, the State of Ohio, and the Dayton Metro Library toward purchasing the site with the intention of having aviation and aerospace research and manufacturing that would attract jobs and businesses, and would serve to anchor economic development in the area. Educational activities include developing exhibits and programs, funding scholarships for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) events, and participating in air and trade shows and commemorative events. In 2014, over 20 distinct educational programs were offered in the NAHA with an estimated participation in excess of 175,000.

The Evaluation found that the NAHA has the governance in place and has staff to operate a sustainable national heritage area organization. Sustainable stewardship activities take the form of partnership development, collaboration, and volunteering. Partners include aviation heritage sites; Wright-Patterson Air Force Base; other Federal, state, and local agencies; Wright State University; other schools, local businesses and foundations; community and service organizations; residents; and neighborhood associations. Since 2007, reported volunteer hours nearly tripled, with 240,000 hours in 2015. The NAHA is fulfilling its legislative mandate .

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives; and the Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd D. Willens', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Todd D. Willens
Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish
and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Sherrod Brown
The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Jim Jordan
The Honorable Warren Davidson
The Honorable Michael Turner
The Honorable Steve Chabot