



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

FEB 11 2015

H32(2257)

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

Dear Chairman:

Pursuant to Public Law 110-229, I am pleased to transmit the *South Carolina National Heritage Corridor Evaluation Findings* (Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged the consulting group Westat as the evaluator 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 South Carolina Evaluation, as required by Section 462 (c) of Public Law 110-229, the NPS recommends a future role with the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor (SCNHC) contingent upon documentation of their current organizational capacity and documentation of improved record keeping. NPS will also work with SCNHC to implement business, fundraising, and financial resource development plans, and form networks of operational and financial partnerships to further long-term sustainability of SCNHC operations.

Bounded by Charleston and the Blue Ridge Mountains, the SCNHC stretches 240 miles through 17 counties and tells the stories of Native Americans and settlers; the growth of Charleston; the farms in the Upcountry; the impact of the Revolutionary War, Civil War, Reconstruction; and industrialization on the landscape and culture. Following designation in 1996, the Governor of South Carolina established a Heritage Tourism Office in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (SCPRT) to work with a Heritage Corridor State Board and a SCNHC nonprofit organization as the coordinating entity. The *Heritage Corridor Plan* was submitted to NPS in 1999 and approved in 2003. Over time, shifting state policies created operational, management, and reporting challenges.

The Evaluation finds that over 15 years, the SCNHC has fulfilled its legislative purposes and management plan goals through the Federal resources provided. SCNHC goals are: resource preservation; education, interpretation, and technical assistance; tourism, recreation and economic development; and marketing, advertising and outreach. SCNHC designated 175 organizations, including nonprofits, businesses, County Community and Visitors' Bureaus, and government agencies as partners with which to work to meet these common goals. The evaluation could not determine the amount of time or resources by goal due to a lack of data collection by SCNHC.

SCNHC provided grants to a range of historic, natural and cultural sites. For example, 126 grants were provided for historic preservation at sites such as Drayton Hall, a National Historic Landmark; 25 grants were provided for conservation at natural areas, such as Beidler Foresta National Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary; and 19 grants for cultural resource preservation. Since 1999, they provided 90 interpretation and education grants. Staff worked to develop curriculum, newsletters, and activities. However, due to staff reductions, educational projects were discontinued. Discovery Centers proposed in the management plan were constructed but eventually transferred to other organizations.

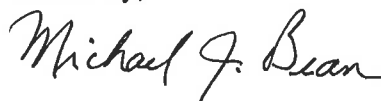
Increasing tourism is a goal of SCNHC; as such, they provide marketing and grants for tourism and economic development. The trails in the management plan were modified to include several more tourism-themed trails throughout the corridor including Garden Destinations, African American Heritage Trail, Military Heritage Trail, Quilt Trail, an Art Trail, and a Nature Route. To promote agricultural tourism, they organized tours, provided grants, and formed a Farmers' Association.

As of 2011, SCNHC expended \$9.2 million worth of NPS funds and \$9.7 in matching dollars. The SCNHC's financial statements indicate that between 1998 and 2011, SCNHC spent \$10.1 million on operations and \$8.9 on program expenses including \$4 million in grants. Funds from the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (SCPRT) are the primary match averaging \$587,000 annually. State bonds supported construction of Discovery Centers. Match from grantees contributes to the Federal match, as well as support from counties, foundations, nonprofits, and corporations.

Based on the findings of the *South Carolina Evaluation*, the NPS recommends a future role with the South Carolina's National Heritage Corridor's contingent upon documentation of their current organizational capacity and documentation of improved record keeping. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exist for NPS's involvement including: providing financial and technical assistance, coordinating training, providing operational guidance and guidance on long-term sustainability planning, 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 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,



Michael Bean
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Lindsey Graham
The Honorable Tim Scott
The Honorable Mark Sanford
The Honorable Joe Wilson
The Honorable Jeff Duncan
The Honorable James E. Clyburn
The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Ken Calvert
The Honorable Betty McCollum



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Committee on Natural Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman:

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Michael Bean
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael J. Bean". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael Bean
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
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