

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY

For the Record

Sabrina Stoker, Executive Director

Poudre Heritage Alliance,

Managing Entity, Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

Committee on Natural Resources

U.S. House of Representatives

The Colorado National Heritage Areas Reauthorization Act (H.R. 7218)

Subcommittee Chair Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee, my name is Sabrina Stoker, and I am the Executive Director of the Poudre Heritage Alliance, the nonprofit organization that manages the Cache la Poudre National Heritage Area. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the bipartisan Colorado National Heritage Areas Reauthorization Act (H.R. 7218) led by Chairman Neguse with primary co-sponsorship from Congressman Lamborn.

Colorado has the honor of having three designated National Heritage Areas: Cache la Poudre, Sangre de Cristo, and South Park. Each of these landscapes is historically and culturally significant and has strong grassroots, regional support.

- The Cache la Poudre National Heritage Area spans 45 miles across a 100-year flood plain and celebrates the vital role this region played in the development of Western water law and the evolution of complex agricultural irrigation systems. We embrace the importance of culture to the people and places along the Cache la Poudre River and the inclusive nature of telling the stories of *all* people.
- The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a crossroads of the centuries with 11,000 years of documented human habitation. Here a unique blend of Native American, Hispano and Anglo settlement is reflected in the diversity of the people, art, and traditions. The geographic isolation of the high desert valley and the peoples' enduring ties to the land have given rise to a rich cultural heritage and ensured its preservation.
- South Park National Heritage Area preserves the authentic experiences of American prospectors, trappers, and even prehistoric man through the preservation of sites that

include historic mines, ranches, railroads and archaeological sites. South Park National Heritage Area welcomes visitors to explore natural wonders and outdoor experiences in the – still wild – West.

The Colorado National Heritage Areas do not own nor manage land within their respective Heritage Areas. Rather, we strive to promote a variety of historical and cultural opportunities, engage visitors and residents in the landscape, and inspire learning, preservation, recreation and stewardship through various programming efforts.

At the Cache la Poudre National Heritage Area, our programs include opportunities for student learning, river safety initiatives, storytelling, visitor wayfinding, historic preservation, oral history documentation, and a variety of family friendly events and activities along the river and its trail system. Community grants promote partnerships throughout our region, and are awarded for preservation, interpretation, and development activities that celebrate the Heritage Area. In the past decade we have invested over half a million dollars in 55 different community grants and leveraged nearly \$14 million dollars of public-private funding.

The National Heritage Area Program is one of the Department of the Interior's most cost-effective initiatives, relying on a system of public-private partnerships in which every federal dollar is matched at an average ratio of 1:5 with other funding. Heritage Areas are funded through the National Recreation and Preservation Account and represent considerably less than 1% of the total National Park Service budget. An economic impact study completed by Tripp Umbach in 2017 found that the Cache la Poudre National Heritage Area generates an annual economic impact of \$81.6 million, while supporting over 1,000 jobs and generating \$6.9 million in tax revenue.

With federal funding for the three Colorado National Heritage Areas scheduled to sunset in 2024, we are pursuing legislative reauthorization of the Heritage Areas from multiple angles.

H.R. 7218 will provide the Colorado National Heritage Areas with crucial funding stability and the opportunity to continue telling the stories that celebrate the culture and heritage of the great State of Colorado. Similarly, the National Heritage Area Act of 2021 (H.R. 1316) will provide long-term stability to all 55 National Heritage Areas (NHAs) through the establishment of a National Heritage Areas System, which will standardize the designation, evaluation, and oversight of NHAs, while maintaining robust protections for private property rights. In addition to supporting H.R. 7218, we also urge you to consider supporting the National Heritage Act of 2021.

Your support of H.R. 7218 will protect these nationally significant landscapes in Colorado and ensure the continuation of valuable partnerships, while reaffirming a commitment to the protection of private property rights. We are grateful for your continued support and commitment to reauthorizing the Colorado National Heritage Areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony to the Subcommittee.