April xx, 2025

To: The Honorable U.S. Senator Michael Bennet

The Honorable U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper

The Honorable U.S. Congresswoman Lauren Boebert

The Honorable U.S. Congressman Gabe Evans

The Honorable U.S. Congressman Joe Neguse

Dear Legislators,

I write in strong support of full funding for America’s National Heritage Areas in both FY 2025 and FY 2026. I have had the pleasure of working closely with and benefiting from Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area (Cache NHA) in Northern Colorado. Its impact on our community is immense and irreplaceable. Cache NHA and the 61 other NHAs around the country deserve adequate funding to continue telling America’s story.

[paragraph on how the partner organization has benefited from the NHA and what program/initiative would go unfunded if federal funding was not provided, community impact, etc. Use both qualitative and quantitative metrics if possible]

Cache NHA’s contributions to our community are indicative of the work of National Heritage Areas from coast to coast. In FY 2023, NHAs leveraged nearly $50 million in non-federal contributions, nearly doubling their federal funding. This public-private partnership led to 2.4 million visitors to NHA events in 2023, conducted through partnerships with more than 7,000 organizations like mine. Indeed, one study found that NHAs were responsible for a nearly $13 billion economic impact in the communities they serve.

Despite growing in numbers, utilization, popularity, and broad bipartisan support, total federal funding for National Heritage Areas has remained relatively flat. In fact, in inflation-adjusted dollars, individual NHAs are currently receiving half of the funding they received 20 years ago. While NHAs have proven they are efficient and effective stewards of taxpayer dollars, any additional reduction in federal support jeopardizes their work and the vital programming they administer. I am particularly concerned about inadequate funding with the 250th Anniversary of America’s independence just around the corner; NHAs can and should be central in highlighting the history of our country during an important milestone.

In FY 2025 and FY 2026, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and its member NHAS are requesting $33.5 million in annual funding for the National Heritage Area program, administered through the National Park Service. This would amount to approximately $500,000 for each NHA – a small price to pay given what they provide to communities like mine. Unfortunately, both the current continuing resolution (CR) and House and Senate versions of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill fall several million dollars short of this modest funding request.

During a time of increased scrutiny over federal spending, I hope members of Congress can recognize the programs that are actually working and providing tremendous returns for taxpayers. That’s why I encourage you to work with your colleagues to ensure that NHAs like Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area get the funding they need to celebrate what makes America special. Please support $33.5 million in total funding for The National Heritage Program.

Sincerely,

[Name
[Organization]