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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **President Trump's Budget Would Have Severe Consequences for Pennsylvania and its National Heritage Areas**

**March 22, 2017** - The National Heritage Areas in Pennsylvania strongly oppose the Trump Administration's Fiscal Year 2018 budget. Officials of the five Pennsylvania National Heritage Areas, including Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Lackawanna Heritage Valley National Heritage Area, Oil Region National Heritage Area, and Schuylkill River National Heritage Area were critical of the administration's proposal to eliminate funding the National Heritage Area Program. There are 49 National Heritage Areas in the United States, and the five in Pennsylvania are among the longest-tenured and are highly effective and successful in the communities where they work.

National Heritage Areas are places where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to form cohesive, nationally important landscapes, and their funding comes from the National Park Service. NHAs are not federal entities, and are administered typically through a local non-profit or unit of local government. Unlike national parks, National Heritage Areas are large lived-in landscapes. The money that comes from the federal budget goes into projects that the NHAs oversees, like rails-to-trails, historic preservation, tourism, community revitalization, and heritage education. The National Heritage Areas in Pennsylvania work in older post-industrial communities assisting in heritage conservation and economic development efforts that have demonstrated success in creating jobs, rebuilding communities, and generating revenue for local governments.

In a series of U.S. Department of Interior Economic Impact studies conducted by the National Park Service since 2013, the five National Heritage Areas in Pennsylvania together have cumulatively accounted for \$950,417,000 in total economic impact in the Commonwealth. Overall, they have created 11,077 jobs across the state and have generated more than \$68,654,000 in tax revenue to local governments. The five NHAs were established in the 1990s or early 2000s and have a long-track record of success in the communities in which they work.

"The Pennsylvania NHAs historically have had support from our congressional delegation, and our two U.S. Senators, Casey and Toomey because of our work and impact the program has had across the Commonwealth. In addition, Congressman Charlie Dent co-chairs a National Heritage Areas Congressional Caucus that works to support all 49 NHAs," said John Phillips spokesperson for the PA NHAs, and President and Chief Executive Officer of the Oil Region Alliance. "Recently, we met in Washington with our Members of Congress and Senators in anticipation of a budget proposal of this type. Our meetings were good, but we all recognize that we have a considerable amount of work to do in order to secure funding for the coming fiscal year."

Delaware & Lehigh: Since its creation in 1988, the D&L has accounted for \$238.7 million annually creating 3,323 jobs and having generated \$22,407,779 for the local governments in Bucks, Carbon, Lehigh, Luzerne and Northampton counties. Elissa Garofalo, Executive Director, said that by eliminating

funding for the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Area the President's proposed budget would hurt the communities which the NHA program was designed to assist. "The D&L's work is exactly what this Administration supports. Through effective public-private partnerships, we are entrepreneurial, cost-effective and benefit tens of thousands of lives each year via economic, health, heritage and environmental programming".

Lackawanna: Since its federal designation in 2000, Lackawanna Valley has accounted for \$31.3 million in total economic impact, creating 382 jobs, and having generated \$2.0 million in tax revenue for the local governments in Lackawanna, Luzerne, Susquehanna, and Wayne counties. Natalie Gelb, Executive Director, said, "Elimination of funding for the Lackawanna Heritage Valley NHA would hurt the communities which the NHA program was designed to assist. In addition to impeding development of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail, all programs and projects of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley will be in jeopardy."

Oil: Since its federal designation in 2004, Oil Region has accounted for \$21.1 million in total annual economic impact, creating 313 jobs, and having generated \$1.5 million in tax revenue yearly for the local governments in Crawford and Venango Counties. John Phillips, President and Chief Executive Officer at the Oil Region Alliance, said, "The federal appropriation is the foundation for leveraging other public and private financial resources to accomplish numerous positive projects each year."

Rivers of Steel: Since its creation in 1996, Rivers of Steel has accounted for \$69.4 million in economic impact, creating 901 jobs and having generated more than \$6,047,217 in for the local governments in Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington, and Westmoreland counties. August R. Carlino, President and Chief Executive Officer, said the budget proposal flies in the face of logic. "If the intention of the Administration is to invest in communities to create jobs, then why eliminate a program that is one of the most effective job-creation programs that the federal government has? Any cut in funding will send a chilling message to our other funding partners at the state, local and philanthropic levels and it may cause them to withdraw from Rivers of Steel programs, creating a disinvestment atmosphere that will have negative economic impact."

Schuylkill River: Since its creation in 2000, Schuylkill River NHA has accounted for \$589.9 million creating 6,154 jobs and having generated \$37.7 million for the local governments in Philadelphia, Chester, Berks, Montgomery, and Schuylkill counties. Tim Fenchel, Interim Executive Director, said, "Every federal dollar we receive is leveraged by an average of \$2.5 from other public and private sources. Our federal funding is critical as the catalyst in supporting projects and programs that have successfully invigorated communities and improved the quality of life throughout the Schuylkill River region."

It is important to point out that the President's budget is only a proposal to Congress, and that final spending authority rests with the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. "NHAs have often faced proposed reductions or eliminations of funding in previous presidential budgets," said Phillips. "In the end, Congress has consistently restored funding to the entire program. This is important for Pennsylvania and the nation, and something we believe is already making America great."

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Note: Data in this press release is from Economic Impact studies and accompanying research that quantify the economic benefit of select NHAs to their local and state communities — measuring job, revenue generation, and economic impacts through a protocol comprising interviews, IMPLAN analysis, and existing data sources. The protocol provides a benchmark for NHAs to complete future economic impact studies. All reports were prepared for the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, by Tripp Umbach of Pittsburgh, PA.

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