



**National Trust for
Historic Preservation**

Save the past. Enrich the future.

**Statement of the National Trust for Historic Preservation
Tom Cassidy, Vice President for Government Relations and Policy
Fiscal Year 2018 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations
Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate
May 26, 2017**

Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Udall, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate this opportunity to present the National Trust for Historic Preservation's recommendations for Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations. My name is Tom Cassidy and I am the Vice President of Government Relations and Policy. The National Trust is a privately-funded nonprofit organization chartered by Congress in 1949. We work to save America's historic places to enrich our future.

The nation faces a challenging fiscal environment. The National Trust recognizes there is a need for fiscal restraint and cost-effective federal investments. However, funding levels proposed in the Administration's budget request threaten to sharply curtail the ability of federal agencies to fulfill their responsibilities to manage preservation, conservation and recreation programs on federal lands. We look forward to working with this Subcommittee as you address the ongoing needs for investments to sustain our nation's rich heritage of cultural and historic resources that generate lasting economic and civic vitality for communities throughout the nation.

National Park Service: Historic Preservation Fund. The Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) is the principal source of funding to implement the nation's historic preservation programs. The Committees have done remarkable work to provide strong funding levels to further the purposes of the Historic Preservation Fund in recent years, and we look forward to working with you to continue this progress. We urge you to reject the Administration's proposed cut of \$29.8 million from the HPF. This would result in the lowest funding level for SHPOs since 2009 and the lowest funding level for THPOs since 2011, when there were 118 THPOs compared to approximately 175 today. In addition, the elimination of four separate competitive grant programs funded last year would result in a sharp decrease in the delivery of preservation services and projects throughout the nation.

We support maintaining at least the Fiscal Year 2017 enacted level of \$80.91 million for the Historic Preservation Fund, including a minimum of \$47.9 million for State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) and \$10.4 million for Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs). We also urge you to maintain at least level funding of \$13 million for competitive grants to preserve the sites and stories of the Civil Rights movement, \$4 million for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and continue to fund \$500,000 for the successful competitive grants program for the survey and nomination of properties associated with communities currently underrepresented in the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks. Recent studies have documented that less than 8% of such listings identify culturally diverse properties. We also support continuation of the Save America's Treasures program, which received \$5 million in Fiscal Year 2017.

The National Park Service distributes HPF grants that are matched by State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs). Inadequate HPF funding limits support for preservation activities such as survey, nomination of properties to the National Register of Historic Places, public education, project review required by the National Historic Preservation Act and for the federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit (HTC). The HTC is the largest federal investment in historic preservation. It has catalyzed rehabilitation

of more than 42,250 buildings. Since its creation more than 30 years ago, the HTC has created more than 2.4 million jobs and leveraged more than \$131 billion in private investment.

National Park Service: Operation of the National Park System. The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for 413 units of the National Park System ranging from the battlefields where our ancestors fought and died to recent additions like the Birmingham Civil Rights National Monument and the Reconstruction Era National Monument. Over the past 20 years, more than 40 new parks have been added to the park system, many of which preserve historic places and themes that have been underrepresented within the system. We strongly oppose the President's proposed budget cuts for National Park Service Operations. The Administration's request of \$2.225 billion—a cut of nearly \$200 million from Fiscal Year 2017—would result in decreased stewardship of historic and cultural resources and reductions in visitor services at a time when our national parks are more popular than ever. We encourage the Committee to provide at least level funding from Fiscal Year 2017 of \$2.45 billion.

National Park Service: Deferred Maintenance. The National Park Service is responsible for maintaining a system comprised of more than 84 million acres that tells the stories of remarkable people and events in our country's history. Unfortunately, after 100 years of operation and inconsistent public funding, the National Park System faces a deferred maintenance backlog estimated at almost \$12 billion, of which 47% is attributed to historic assets. Deferred maintenance in our national parks puts historic and cultural sites at risk of permanent damage or loss, and in the absence of funding, the condition of these assets will continue to deteriorate and become more expensive to repair and preserve in the future.

- **Construction.** We concur with the recommendation in the President's budget blueprint "that the National Park Service assets are preserved for future generations by increasing investment in deferred maintenance projects." Similarly, we support the Administration's budget request for a \$7.2 million increase over FY17 enacted for the Line Item Construction program, which addresses the deferred maintenance for the NPS' highest priority non-transportation assets with projects larger than \$1 million.
- **Repair and Rehabilitation; Cyclic Maintenance.** We strongly oppose the Administration's proposed reductions for Repair and Rehabilitation and Cyclic Maintenance. These investments support a service-wide deferred maintenance strategy that directs funds to high priority mission critical and mission dependent assets required to maintain historic structures and that are essential to abate the continued growth of the deferred maintenance backlog. After years of level funding or modest increases for both Repair and Rehabilitation and Cyclic Maintenance, we were pleased to see increases for FY 2016 and FY 2017 and thank the Committee for its commitment to addressing the deferred maintenance backlog. Additional investments will contribute to the successful preservation of historic sites and other resources in the National Park System.

Finally, we strongly support the creation of a reliable, dedicated federal funding source distinct from annual appropriations to address the deferred maintenance backlog, as outlined in bipartisan legislation introduced (S. 751 / H.R. 2584) in the Senate and House.

National Park Service: Leasing Historic Structures in National Parks. We appreciate the Committees' strong support of expanded use of historic leasing authorities by the NPS. We look forward to working with the Subcommittee and the Service as it completes the report called for in last year's Omnibus.

National Park Service: National Heritage Areas. We recommend funding for the Heritage Partnership Program and our National Heritage Areas (NHAs) at the Fiscal Year 2017 enacted level of \$19.8 million. The Administration's proposal to eliminate NHA funding would severely impair the sustainability of the program and render many NHAs unable to function.

National Park Service: Philanthropy and Partnerships. The National Trust supports the Centennial Challenge, which provides federal funding to match donations for signature National Park Service projects and programs, and urge the Committee to consider funding this initiative at least at the FY 17 enacted level. This funding will allow the NPS to leverage private contributions to enhance visitor services and improve cultural and natural resources across the parks in the Service.

As part of our commitment to assist the NPS reduce the maintenance backlog of historic properties, the National Trust launched the HOPE (Hands-On Preservation Experience) Crew initiative in 2014 to train young adults in preservation skills while helping protect and restore historic sites. Youth and veterans are trained in the preservation skills necessary to perform preservation work in the parks and other federal lands through a cooperative agreement between the NPS, other federal land management agencies, and several NGOs including the Student Conservation Association and The Corps Network. Since 2014, HOPE Crew has trained over 600 young people and veterans at 100 projects nationwide, resulting in 80,000 hours and \$14.3 million in preservation work to protect places that are significant to their communities, including rehabilitating structures at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument, Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and Shenandoah National Park. Projects like these help reduce the maintenance backlog while providing job skills and education for the next generation of stewards of America's most important historic sites.

Bureau of Land Management: Cultural Resources Management. The cultural resources program funds National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 review of 13,000 land-use proposals each year, compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and Government-to-Government consultation with Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Governments. We recommend \$17.3 million, a modest increase of \$1.2 million above the FY 2017 enacted level. This account has been level funded for years. Increased funding is necessary to fulfill BLM's statutory requirements for Section 106 reviews of land use proposals and NHPA's Section 110 requirements for inventory and protection cultural resources. The increase would support surveys of sensitive areas, site protection and stabilization projects for sites vulnerable to unauthorized activities and damage due to fire, erosion and changing water levels. Funding would also support updated predictive modeling and data analysis to enhance the BLM's ability to address large-scale, cross-jurisdictional land-use projects.

The BLM oversees the largest, most diverse and scientifically important collection of historic and cultural resources on our nation's public lands, as well as the museum collections and data associated with them. Since FY 2003, the cultural resources program has lost 19 FTEs while the demand for Section 106 compliance has remained even or increased. The loss of personnel has diminished the BLM's ability to review land proposals like transmission lines, energy development and recreation permits. The Administration's proposed overall reduction of 1,062 FTE from BLM would sharply erode the agency's capacity to fulfill its mission and responsibilities. We urge the Committee to reject this proposed dramatic reduction in staffing.

Bureau of Land Management: National Landscape Conservation System. The BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (National Conservation Lands) includes 36 million acres of congressionally and presidentially designated lands, including National Monuments,

National Conservation Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, National Scenic and Historic Trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. We encourage the Committee to provide \$50.6 million to the base program for the National Landscape Conservation System, an increase of \$13.8 million above the Fiscal Year 2017 enacted level. The increase in base funding will prevent critical damage to the resources found in these areas, ensure proper management and provide for a quality visitor experience. This funding level would enable BLM to hire essential management and law enforcement staff, monitor and protect natural and cultural resources, close unauthorized routes that damage fragile cultural sites and undertake needed ecosystem and species restoration projects. We also support maintaining funding for wilderness management of at least \$18.2 million and providing level funding of \$779,000 for national monument management on Oregon and California Grant Lands. We urge you to reject the Administration's proposed cuts to these programs, which would result in reduced visitor services, decreased maintenance and care of trails, and fewer educational and interpretive resources.

As the nation's newest system of protected lands, the National Conservation Lands encompass some of our country's most significant historic and cultural resources, yet the BLM's ability to steward these resources is undermined by insufficient funding. The National Conservation Lands are just one-tenth of BLM managed lands but they host one-third of all BLM's visitors. Without sufficient funding, the BLM struggles to complete essential resource protection, such as signing trails, inventorying and protecting cultural sites from looting and vandalism.

Department-Wide: Land and Water Conservation Fund. The National Trust supports robust funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and we urge the Committee to reject the drastic cut proposed for the program in the Administration's budget request. We encourage the Committee to restore funding to the FY 2016 enacted level of \$450 million, which is just half of the \$900 million from offshore mineral leasing revenues dedicated to LWCF annually. Many of the nation's most significant historic and cultural landscapes have been permanently protected through LWCF investments, including Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument and Harpers Ferry National Historic Park. In total, more than \$550 million has been invested to acquire historic sites and 137,000 acres in 162 NPS units. Within LWCF funding, we encourage the Committee to provide at least level funding of \$10 million for the American Battlefield Protection Program.

Independent Agencies: National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities. We urge the Committee to reject the Administration's proposed elimination of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and instead maintain the Fiscal Year 2017 enacted level of \$149.8 million for each program. NEA and NEH funding is critical to communities around the country. It supports efforts by the National Trust's Historic Sites and others to tell a fuller American story and engage visitors with history in compelling ways. For example, support from the NEA has created programs like Art and Shadows at the Shadows-on-the-Teche in Louisiana that put regionally-based artists in residence at the site, resulting in programming that attracted new audiences and served as a prototype for broader arts-focused programming that now draws people from around the country to the town's downtown commercial district. NEH support has brought teachers from around the country to learn about history in the places that it was made and carry those experiences back to their classrooms, such as exploring the intellectual underpinnings of the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier or discovering the rich, but largely unknown, African American history in the President's neighborhood at Decatur House.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the National Trust's recommendations for the FY 2018 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill.