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COUNTY OF PARK

Board of County Commissioners



January 25, 2022

The Honorable Michael Bennet
Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Building
1244 Speer Boulevard
Denver, CO 80204

The Honorable John Hickenlooper
Byron Rogers Federal Building
1961 Stout St., Ste. 12-300
Denver, CO. 80294

Dear Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper:

We, the Park County Board of County Commissioners, are writing to ask for you to support legislation to reauthorize the South Park National Heritage Area (SPNHA).

The SPNHA, *individually* authorized in 2009, has made a dramatic impact on the economy and quality of life here in Park County. Local ranchers, property owners, and preservationists have worked together to save this idyllic landscape, where nature's bounty and historic remnants blend seamlessly together.

The SPNHA has a demonstrated track record of success in preserving and protecting rural Colorado's historic and natural wonders.

- Our 8-year project to renovate the historic Paris Mill is entering a critical phase.
- On November 1, 2017, the Tarryall Rural Historic District, which encompasses over 28,000 acres stretching along CR77 from Jefferson down to U.S. Highway 24, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- In 2019, SPNHA received the Stephen H. Hart Award for Historic Preservation, History Colorado's premiere recognition of archaeology and preservation projects.

SPNHA is a true partnership of local residents, local and state governments (including the State Historical Fund and the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation) and the National Park Service. This partnership has leveraged \$3 million in federal funds with over \$5.6 million in local match, providing \$937,000 in sub-grants to worthy but fledgling non-profits – a great return on investment.

Unfortunately, the legislation that created the South Park National Heritage Area is due to sunset in 2024. Without new legislation, the SPNHA will no longer be able access financial support from the National Park Service – support that is crucial to continued existence of the SPNHA.

Richard Elsner
(719) 836-4209

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We realize that 2024 might appear, legislatively, far off, but circumstances create an urgency for action now. There are several avenues for reauthorization. S.1942 bipartisan legislation introduced by Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) would replace individual National Heritage Area authorizations and create National Heritage Area program legislation which would reauthorize all 55 National Areas across the nation, including the three in Colorado. However, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee recently *bundled* a group of 35 individual reauthorizations facing imminent sunsets into S.3435. However, S.3435 did not address almost all of the National Heritage Areas which sunset in 2024, including all three in Colorado.

We ask that you consider introducing individual reauthorization legislation. The Alliance of National Heritage Areas has assisted SPNHA in drafting such legislation that would address this issue, a copy of which is attached. Furthermore, should S.3435 reach the Senate floor for consideration, we ask that you request an amendment to include the Colorado NHAs in that bill

We appreciate your help and look forward to working with you to help Park County and reauthorize the South Park National Heritage Area. Thank you for your time and considering our request.

Sincerely,

Richard Elsner, PARK COUNTY COMMISSIONER

RAY DOUGLAS ,PARK COUNTY COMMISSIONER

AMY MITCHELL PARK COUNTY COMMISSIONER

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