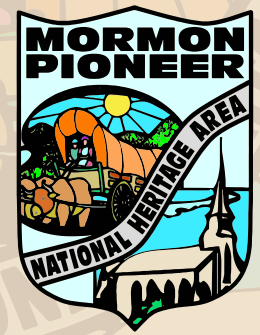


APRIL 19, 2019

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY FOR THE RECORD

RE: NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA ACT OF 2019 (H.R. 1049)
MONTE R. BONA, DIRECTOR
MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee, my name is Monte Bona, and I serve as the Director of the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area. I am writing to ask the Committee on Natural Resources to support H.R. 1049, the National Heritage Act of 2019, introduced by Representative Paul Tonko and Representative David McKinley, with strong bipartisan support from 86 co-sponsors.

H.R. 1049 will replace 55 individual National Heritage Area (NHA) authorizations with a national system of NHAs as an integral part of the National Park Service, thereby improving and sustaining the important work of America's national heritage areas for future success. This bill will ensure uniform standards for the way NHAs are designated, managed, and assessed. It will also provide Congress with greater capacity for program oversight.

The National Heritage Area program is one of the U.S. Department of the Interior's most cost-effective initiatives, taking up less than 1 percent of the total National Park Service budget. All 55 heritage areas, including the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area (MPNHA), are public/private partnerships, under which every federal dollar must be matched by at least \$1 in other public or private funding. The actual match is \$5.50 in local funding to every \$1 in federal funds.

We believe the MPNHA has distinguished itself in leveraging federal funds. By keeping administrative expenses low, we have maximized grants for local projects. Our ten-year report shows that between 2006 when the MPNHA was authorized and 2016, we received \$2.2 million in federal funds. In that same time frame, we supported projects valued at \$44.3 million, which comes to \$19 in funding from state and local governments, nonprofit organizations and individual donors for every federal dollar.

The six counties in our heritage area, with a cumulative population of 68,000, are rural and economically disadvantaged. The area is below national and state norms in household income and job creation. Most counties in the heritage area have above average unemployment. Based on a conservative multiplier, the MPNHA, by helping spur \$44 million in projects, contributed to a \$70 million economic impact in heritage area counties.

Our heritage area has also promoted tourist visits to Mormon pioneer sites. From 2013 to 2016, we counted about 185,000 visitors per year. Based on visitor expenditure estimates from the Utah Office of Tourism, those visitors spent \$2.25 million per year. Applying the economic multiplier and extending our estimate over the 10-year report period, the tourist visits have had an economic impact of \$30 million. All that adds up to a \$100 million

impact over ten years since authorization.

However, dollar figures cannot convey the benefits of buildings restored, historic Main Streets preserved, interpretive sites established, trails developed, cultural and artistic programs presented, over 40 "Discovery Road" television shows produced, aired and distributed through the Utah Education Network, "Legends, Lore and True Tales in Mormon Country," published by History Press/Arcadia Publishing, and hundreds of thousands of lives inspired by connecting with the history of the Mormon pioneers.

These efforts have been recognized by a "Best of State Award," which we were honored to have presented to Joyce McKay Bennett, wife of the late U.S. Senator, Robert F. Bennett, who sponsored the legislation that created the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area. Other awards include "Pioneer of Progress," given by the Days of 47 Committee; Six County Regional Recognition Award, which stated, "In recognition of the tireless effort, resolute determination, and enduring qualities which brought about the evolutionary development of a congressional heritage area designation from a mere idea which has greatly enhanced the viability of the Six County Region through job creation and retention" (The Six County Economic Development District Board, February 10, 2010).

The Utah Heritage Foundation 2013 Heritage Award was given "For having a vision that utilizes historic preservation and working tirelessly throughout central Utah to save historic buildings and create the Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area."

Utah Division of State History presented an Outstanding Contribution Award "In recognition of Outstanding Efforts in Preserving the history of Sanpete County." (September 12, 2012). Six years later (September 28, 2018), the Board of State History presented an Outstanding Achievement Award "For the Influential Heritage Highway 89/Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area."

The awards received reflect the effectiveness of projects and programs carried out by Utah state and local governments, Utah nonprofit organizations and foundations (especially the George S. and Dolores Dore' Eccles Foundation). We are also grateful for the support of average Utahns. National heritage areas such as the MPNHA are bringing the National Park Service mission of preservation and interpretation out from behind the enclaves of federal lands and directly to the people. This work is being accomplished while honoring private property rights and local zoning. Indeed, Senator Robert Bennett made certain that these protections were included in the enabling legislation.

Since being designated on October 12, 2006, the MPNHA has striven diligently to honor our beloved late Senator, Robert F. Bennett, for his tenacity in honoring the Mormon pioneers, who made a major contribution in developing the West.

MPNHA Board Members, who are appointed by county commissions in six counties, join with our fellow NHAs in requesting the Committee's support for H.R. 1049. We express our appreciation for your service and thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

The 10 Year Report may be viewed at this link:

<http://www.mormonpioneerheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/MPNHA-10-Year-Report-September-9-2017.pdf>