

TESTIMONY OF

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of the
Delaware & Lehigh NHC, Incorporated**

**Submitted to
Subcommittee on National Parks
Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives**

**Regarding H.R. 3809
To amend the Delaware and Lehigh National heritage Corridor Act of 1988**

June 5, 2008

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, my name is Allen Sachse and I am President/Executive Director of the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Incorporated (D&L) – a 501(c)3 non-profit. The D&L was created to succeed the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Commission (Commission) as the managing partner of the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (Corridor). For several years, the Commission and the D&L shared the role as ‘managing partners’. I appreciate this opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Corridor partnership and ask for your approval of H.R. 3809.

Congress designated the Corridor as the nation’s third national heritage corridor in November 1988. The Corridor’s authorizing legislation also established a Commission to assist the state and local agencies in preserving and interpreting the Corridor’s historic, cultural and natural resources, while fostering economic development focused on those resources. The Management Action Plan, approved by the Secretary of Interior in 1993, recognized the Corridor’s stories and related resources as nationally significant.

Located in five counties of eastern Pennsylvania with a population over 1.6 million, the spine of the Corridor follows an historic transportation system of overland railroads and canals for 165 miles. The system was innovative in its day, and continued to operate for over 100 years, becoming the nation’s longest operating canal system. From the Wyoming Valley in the north to the port town of Bristol in the south, the system moved anthracite coal igniting and fueling the industrial revolution. Along the route a diversity of industries flourished, including iron and steel, cement, transportation, textile, slate, zinc and others.

The last two decades have seen the emergence of heritage partnerships throughout the United States. I have observed some very common similarities among the more successful heritage partnerships:

- A strong local pride of cultural and natural heritage and a belief that the region has an important story to tell and a responsibility to share this story;
- The region exhibits a distinctive landscape, clearly reflecting its cultural natural heritage;
- This pride of heritage is embraced by the broadest range of community leaders and there is a consensus that the practice of heritage development will improve the quality of life and enhance the region's economy;
- A partnership network evolves focusing on one common vision led by creativity, dedication and the ability to reach across traditional boundaries.

In 2005, the Commission determined the time had come to have an independent evaluation of accomplishments and an assessment of the Corridor partnership network. Recognizing there were few examples of appropriate research models to follow, the Commission engaged the services of the **Conservation Study Institute (CSI), Northeast Region of the National Park Service** to accomplish the task. The findings are detailed in the report titled *Connecting Stories, Landscapes, and People: Exploring the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Partnership*, which was completed and published in spring of 2006. (A copy of the report is attached for reference and documentation.)

The CSI was asked by the Commission to address the following specific issues:

- Evaluate progress toward accomplishing the purposes of the Corridor's authorizing legislation and the strategies set forth in the Corridor's Management Action Plan of 1993.
- Identify additional actions and work needed to protect, enhance, and interpret the Corridor and its nationally significant resources.
- Analyze the National Park Service and Pennsylvania Heritage Park Program (PHPP) investments to determine the leverage and impacts of these investments.
- Examine models, options, and opportunities to enhance state and local partnerships and to continue the NPS relationship, including the possibility of a permanent NPS designation or a new framework to support the work of the Corridor initiative.

The CSI was not asked to provide specific recommendations regarding the future management of the Corridor partnership network. Instead, through rigorous research CSI was asked to identify the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for the partnership - so that the managing partners could make informed decisions regarding the future of the Corridor partnership.

We found that of the 175 actions in the Management Action Plan, 145 (or 83%) were acted upon; almost half of these projects being Corridor wide in scope; and 67 were determined to be "ongoing" activities that will require ongoing commitment to continue

maintenance of these achievements. These findings make it apparent that time is important as well as the careful selection and seeding of early projects. Approximately two thirds of all projects have been initiated in the last six years. As momentum builds, the managing partner(s) continues to be challenged with the task of building the capacity and sustainability of the numerous local partners.

The partnership's ability to leverage funding and other resources has been impressive. The study substantiated that for each dollar provided through the National Park Service, the Corridor was able to directly leverage almost 12 dollars from other sources. In addition these statistics considerable amount of indirect funding and volunteer services were leveraged but not counted.

Looking to the future, the CSI identified critical ingredients necessary for sustained success of the partnership network. Foremost among the ingredients was the NPS role, as referenced on page 59 of the report, "*The **anchoring state and federal government connections** provided by the DCNR (PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) and the NPS are extremely important to the stability and sustainability of the D&L partnership system. These two partners have played critical and complementary roles in the Corridor partnership for a long time—the DCNR since it was formed in 1993 and the NPS since the Corridor's formative stages. They provide credibility and reinforce the importance of the Corridor initiative for partners and communities. Other critical structural ingredients include **secure, stable funding from diverse sources** and the **ability to leverage funds, resources, and ideas**. It is important to note that the ability to leverage derives primarily from the funding and participation of the two anchoring state and federal partners.*"

All future management options recognized the importance of a continuing relationship with the ***anchoring partners - DCNR and the NPS***. However, one option addressed the possibility of moving forward without a federally authorized management entity and dedicated federal funding. If this were to become a reality, the study team referenced its findings on page 62 of the report, "*this scenario would be a significant setback for the Corridor initiative and in all likelihood would substantially slow the progress toward achieving its broad mandate. Without federal authorization, D&L, Inc., and the partnership overall could have reduced stature, clout, and credibility with government agencies and other stakeholders. Perhaps more importantly, the loss of dedicated federal funding would leave a substantial void—both in direct terms for Corridor operations and management plan implementation, and indirectly in leveraging support from others.*"

Among the various other options for the future, the managing partners concluded that the time is appropriate to fully shift the responsibility for managing the partnership network to the D&L, thus, allowing the federal Commission to sunset in November 2007. This move has already provided additional administrative flexibility while expanding the base of funding support.

Also, the Corridor intends to pursue opportunities to strengthen the existing partnership with the NPS. This will include technical assistance and other services; developing

working relationships with nearby NPS units; and, as referenced on page 65 of the report, possibly seeking a Congressional “*authorization of a ‘special resource study’ to explore potential permanent NPS involvement and additional designations*” for the Corridor.

The managing partners have committed a substantial amount of time and effort evaluating accomplishments and weighting options for the future. We remain focused on the vision of a strong partnership network preserving and sharing the nationally significant resources and stories of the Corridor. We continue to seek out ways to empower our partners’ creativity, to support their work, to share their accomplishments and strengthen their capacity. As an organization we recognize that our partnership network and their accomplishments is our measurement of success. We must serve our partners well by focusing on the vision of the Corridor; by minimizing the bureaucracy often associated with state and federal programs; by providing quality programs and services; and by being creative, flexible and innovative.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to review the work of the Corridor and share with you what we believe will make the Corridor stronger and more efficient. The managing partners took the evaluation process very seriously and today we are using the findings to help shape our future. I ask for your approval of H.R. 3809, which will provide the time, resources and support necessary to continue the work of the Corridor.