Enhancing Our Region’s National Identity and Quality of Life

The Susquehanna National Heritage Area will boost visibility for the Susquehanna River and surrounding areas of South Central Pennsylvania as a national destination for heritage and outdoor visitors, help communities harness the economic power of tourism, create jobs, and improve quality of life. Our region will benefit from enhanced national identity, new National Park Service partnerships, and a fair share of federal funding committed to America’s fifty-five National Heritage Areas.

Honoring the State and National Significance of Our Area

Lancaster and York Counties together were officially designated as Pennsylvania’s tenth State Heritage Area in 2001, with what is now the Susquehanna Heritage Corporation named as the non-profit management entity. State designation involved extensive community engagement to develop a study of heritage resources and a Management Action Plan to define goals, themes, and projects. The process highlighted our region’s unique town and country landscapes, historic sites, and natural wonders and confirmed the key role our people played in advancing American freedom, agriculture, and industry. Upon completion of a Feasibility Study Report in 2008, the National Park Service found our region also meets the criteria for National Heritage Area designation by Congress.

Taking Action with Our Leaders in Congress

U.S. Senator Bob Casey, Jr. of Pennsylvania sponsored legislation to designate the Susquehanna National Heritage Area in every session of Congress since 2008. Congressman Lloyd Smucker (PA-11) joined the effort in 2017 after being elected to national office.

In early 2019, the Susquehanna National Heritage Area was included in S.47, the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, which was approved by Congress in February 2019 and signed by President Trump in March 2019. The Act named Susquehanna Heritage Corporation as the Local Coordinating Entity for the new National Heritage Area and authorized federal funding to carry out heritage and conservation activities.

Building on a Track Record of Success

Susquehanna Heritage Corporation, now doing business as Susquehanna National Heritage Area (SNHA), has a nineteen-year track record of heritage and community development success in our region, with a special focus on placemaking and tourism along the Susquehanna River. SNHA has helped attract $19+ million to advance heritage and conservation efforts and has ongoing public and private funding to match federal support. SNHA’s Strategic Plan focuses on developing the river and nearby communities as a national destination for heritage and outdoor travelers and a sustainable economic generator for our region. SNHA’s leadership is committed to this vision.

SNHA leads National Heritage Area activities from our historic riverfront home at the Zimmerman Center for Heritage in York County and the Columbia Crossing River Trails Center we manage in Lancaster County. The National Park Service has designated the Zimmerman Center as Pennsylvania’s official Visitor Contact & Passport Station for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Trail—America’s first water-based National Historic Trail. National Heritage Area designation builds on this important partnership with the National Park Service to expand collaboration to the regional level.

The Susquehanna National Heritage Area honors our region’s important place in the National Story and brings new resources and economic vitality to our communities.