



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

OCT 06 2016

H36(2257)

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

Pursuant to Public Law 113-291, I am pleased to transmit the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (YCNHA) Evaluation Findings (Evaluation). The National Park Service (NPS) engaged Westat as the evaluator to independently assess the progress, analyze the investments, and identify the critical components for sustainability of the national heritage area. Based on the findings of the Evaluation, the NPS recommends a future role with Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (YCNHA). The NPS will continue to work with YCNHA to implement business, fundraising, and financial resource plans and continue to form networks of operational and financial partnerships to further sustainability of YCNHA operations.

In 2000, Congress designated Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area for its historic and cultural significance in America's west. Its 21 square miles include the City of Yuma, Yuma County, and the multi-jurisdictional Colorado River. The Yuma Crossing National Area Corporation, the coordinating entity, was formed as a 501 (c) to bridge political boundaries and seek support.

The Evaluation determined that the YCNHA Corporation addressed its legislated purposes and management plan goals with the support of the federal resources provided. Both the NPS funds and the National Heritage Area designation are of value to the YCNHA as it brings diverse partners together to complete projects. YCNHA successfully met the 50 percent federal funding match requirements from 2002 to 2014, with a total of \$18 million in nonfederal funds to \$4.1 million in NPS Heritage Partnership Program dollars. This match includes \$7.1 million of in-kind funding from the City of Yuma for staff salaries, the cost for use of the Heritage Center building, and services provided by the Parks and Recreation Department. An additional \$7 million in other Federal funds came from the Bureau of Reclamation and Federal Highway Administration for wayfinding and trail development, and others for the Yuma West Wetlands and Yuma East Wetlands.

YCNHA's management plan includes goals around capital construction, conservation, restoration, preservation, marketing and economic development. The Yuma West Wetlands was

the first construction project and reclaimed 110 acres that was a landfill to create a riverfront park. Another major achievement was partnering with the Quechan Tribe to reopen the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge after it was closed in 1980 for structural problems. Each partner contributed \$200,000 as a match to state and federal funds to restore the bridge. The Yuma East Wetlands project helped to restore 400 acres along the Colorado River. In 2007, Gateway Park expanded access to the river with \$4.4 million in funds from federal, and state, and local funds. Pivot Point Plaza commercial and interpretive site opened in 2010, leveraging \$1.2 million in non-NPS federal funding. When the State of Arizona was no longer able to operate the Yuma Territorial Prison and Quartermaster Depot state parks, YCNHA raised \$70,000 in 60 days to keep the sites open, then assumed operation of both parks and completed important renovations.

The Evaluation found that YCNHA Corporation has the governance in place and is staffed appropriately to operate a sustainable NHA organization. Its partnership with the City of Yuma is strong, including shared staff and facilities. It has other important partnerships and board representation from the public, private companies, state and local government, federal agencies, and tribal councils. YCNHA is fulfilling its legislative mandate and contributes to the mission of the NPS. However, without NPS funds, the Yuma Crossing National Historic Landmark, the Yuma Territorial Prison and Quartermaster Depot, and other significant resources could be negatively impacted. With appropriate authorization, a range of options exists for NPS involvement, including providing financial and technical assistance, training, guidance on planning, partnering with national parks, or consulting on preservation and conservation.

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources; the Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives; and the Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, United States House of Representatives.

Sincerely,



Michael Bean
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Jeff Flake
The Honorable John McCain
The Honorable Paul A. Gosar



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Michael Bean
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Washington, D.C. 20515

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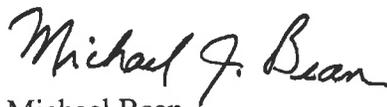
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