**Legislative Round Up**

**Final Session of the 117th Congress**

**Approved Policy Priorities | Advocacy Road Trip Talking Points**

* **National Heritage Area Act**, S. 1942: Establishes a standard criterium for the funding, management, and designation for national heritage areas and set an annual authorization of $1 million for each national heritage area. In additional, specifically for the Southeast, S. 1942:
* Authorize a feasibility study for the Great Dismal Swamp National Heritage Area in Virginia and North Carolina.
* Designate three new National Heritage Areas in the Southeast: Alabama Black Belt NHA, Southern Campaign of the American Revolution National Heritage Corridor in South Carolina and North Carolina, and the Northern Neck National Heritage Area in Virginia.
* Reauthorize 45 National Heritage Areas for 15 years, including 13 in the Southeast.
* Lift the funding cap for three Southeast National Heritage Areas: Blue Ridge, South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, and Wheeling.
* Final passage vote in the House, Roll Call #540: <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes/2022540?Title=National%20Heritage%20Area%20Act>
* **Visit American Act:** Creates an assistant secretary position within the Department of Commerce focused on coordinating travel and tourism policy across federal stakeholders and formally authorizes the U.S. Travel and Tourism Advisory Board (TTAB) to serve as the advisory body to the Secretary and help develop a 10-year travel and tourism strategy that sets goals for international visitation and travel exports, and ensures domestic policy is optimal for achieving these priorities. (Currently the TTAB operates on a discretionary basis.)
* **National Scenic Byways Program funding:** $20 million, an increase of $14 million over FY22.
* **National Park Service Operations Budget**: $2.9 billion for the Operations, an increase of $156 million above FY22, which will restore 500 positions of the 3,000 lost over the last decade.
* U.S. Forest Service Operations Budget: $3.91 billion for the Forest Service’s non-wildland fire management responsibilities, an increase of $222 million over FY22. These funding increases are expected to radically improve fire restoration and fire risk reduction efforts and to increase year-round staffing to increase this work.

**Pro-Tourism Provisions in FY23 Omnibus Appropriations Bill**

Agriculture & Rural Development

* $455 million for **rural broadband** to expand service to provide economic development opportunities and improved education and health care services. Included in this appropriation is $348 million for the **ReConnect program**, which offers loans, grants, and loan grant combinations to facilitate broadband deployment to rural communities that do not have sufficient access to broadband.

Energy, Water Development and Related Agencies

* **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**: $8.66 billion in funding, an increase of $317 million above FY22.
* **Appalachian Regional Commission**: $200 million in funding, an increase of $5 million above FY22.
* **Delta Regional Authority**: $30 million in funding, which is targeted to the economic development needs of distressed communities of the Mississippi River Delta Region.
* **Southeast Crescent Regional Commission**: $20 million in funding, an increase of $15 million over FY22. The funding targets the economic development needs of distressed communities in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies

* **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**: $1.8 billion in total funding, which is $128 million above FY FY22 $62 million and includes:
* $542 million for the National Wildlife Refuge System, an increase of $23 million above FY22.
* **National Park Service**: $3.5 billion in total funding, which is $210 million above FY22, and includes:
* $2.9 billion for the Operation of the National Park System, an increase of $156 million above FY22.
* $29.2 million for the **National Heritage Area Program**, a $2.1 million increase over FY22.
* $93 million for **National Recreation and Preservation**, an increase of $9 million over FY22.
* $205 million for the **Historic Preservation Fund**, an increase of $32 million over FY22 and includes:
* $62 million for **State and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices**
* $26.5 million for **Save America’s Treasures** grants
* $30 million for the **African American Civil Rights grants program**
* **U.S. Forest Service**: $3.9 billion, an increase of $222.7 million above FY22.
* **National Endowment for the Arts**: $207 million in funding, an increase of $27 million above FY22.
* **National Endowment for the Humanities**: $207 million in funding, an increase of $27 million above FY21.
* **Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCFP)**: the bill renews the focus on land and water conservation with full funding of $900 million for land acquisition and support for state recreation programs through the LWCFP and $681.7 million for Geographic Programs to restore nationally significant bodies of water.
* **Bureau of Land Management (BLM):** $1.7 billion in funding, an increase of $83 million above FY22, including $11 million for **National and Scenic Historic Trails.**

Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education

* **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Grants**: $2.9 billion in funding, an increase of $50 million above FY22.
* **Strengthening Community College Training Grants**: $65 million, an increase of $15 million over FY22. The grants support programs to help meet local and regional labor market demand for a skilled workforce by providing training to workers in in-demand industries at community colleges and four-year partners.
* **Institute for Museum and Library Services**: $295 million, an increase of $27 million over FY22.

Transportation and Housing and Urban Development

* **National Scenic Byways Program**: $20 million, a $14 million increase over FY22. The legislation also removes the preference for projects above $500,000 giving greater access to smaller communities and projects.
* **Amtrak:** $2.45 billion, a $121.6 million increase over FY22.