



June 24, 2021

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Merkley, and Ranking Member Murkowski:

The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail (WARO) was created to commemorate the American-French march from New England to victory at Yorktown, a march that included one-quarter Black and Indigenous soldiers in the Continental Army.

The 680-mile Trail goes through a dozen minority-majority “Founding Cities” and is the most urban trail in the National Trails system within the National Park Service (NPS). The Trail celebrates not only our independence, but also the vital alliance with our nation’s first ally, France and the important, but little appreciated role of Black and Indigenous people in the fight for American independence. Additional federal resources are critical to tell this story.

We write in support of robust funding for the National Trails system overall, and specifically we seek \$700,000 in line-item FY 2022 funding for NPS system operation of the WARO Trail. We also seek new discretionary appropriation for WARO through the NPS of \$9 million for resource stewardship in FY2022 to fund planning, research, education, and interpretation for the trail.

The Trail was Congressionally designated in 2009, and for ten years had only one half-time staff member. In 2019, one full-time Trail Administrator was hired to cover the 680-mile trail. With more than 500 Revolutionary locations in the trail corridor, five high potential route segments, and 115 high potential historic sites, additional staff are essential, particularly as the nation prepares for the upcoming America 250 Commemoration. The Trail is administered by the NPS and managed in partnership with the National Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Association, a 501(c)3 organization that in 2019 logged 11,714 volunteer hours to support it. (The entire national trails system with a huge network of volunteers is the best leveraged program in the DOI. The monetized value of partner volunteers and private dollars raised equals or exceeds the annual Federal allocation to the Trails system.)

The WARO Trail tells a great story of American freedom, and is well suited to promoting heritage tourism, outdoor recreation, and education in a dozen diverse “Founding Cities” that have economically disadvantaged populations, often in communities located adjacent to center

city or Main Street neighborhoods. From north to south, the cities are Boston, MA; Providence, RI; Hartford and Waterbury, CT; White Plains, NY; Newark, New Brunswick, and Trenton, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Wilmington, DE; Baltimore, MD; and Washington, DC.

By using the WARO National Historic Trail Founding Cities initiative to tell the story of the march to victory in Yorktown, we will benefit the 69 million residents of the WARO route's nine states and the District of Columbia. In addition, we will benefit all Americans who wish to see their faces in the story of American freedom—and honor our French allies at the same time.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senate



CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
United States Senate

/s/ Thomas R. Carper

THOMAS R. CARPER
United States Senate



CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senate



BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senate

/s/ Jack Reed

JACK REED
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senate



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senate

/s/ Robert Casey, Jr.

ROBERT P. CASEY
United States Senate

/s/ Tim Kaine

TIM KAINÉ
United States Senate