

Memorandum

From: Representative R. Lee James
To: All House members
Subject: Heritage Areas Program Act

I intend to introduce legislation that would create the Heritage Areas Program Act, which would create a formal process for the distribution of funding under the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) Heritage Parks line item.

Established in 1989, the Heritage Parks Program designated twelve geographic regions within Pennsylvania with historical, recreational and cultural value. Heritage Areas have been shown to stimulate community revitalization and economic development through recreation, tourism and other partnerships.

The National Heritage Areas Program was patterned after Pennsylvania's program. Ohio, Maryland, Delaware, Colorado and New York are several states that have received and benefitted from Pennsylvania's guidance and technical assistance.

The legislation will do the following:

- Direct DCNR to distribute equal funding from the Heritage Parks line-item to the twelve Heritage Areas. The areas are directed to use that funding for operating costs, marketing, promotion and coordinating efforts with other agencies and organizations.
- Authorize the Heritage Areas to provide grants and loans to other entities, including non-profits, governmental entities and private businesses for the purposes of promoting, operating or marketing the area.
- Create a Heritage Partnerships Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from the General Assembly, DCNR, DCED, PennDOT, PA Historical and Museum Commission, Center for Rural Pennsylvania, Heritage PA and Preservation PA. The advisory committee would be tasked with providing guidance to DCNR and assist in obtaining additional federal, state or other funding.

If you have any questions regarding this proposed legislation, please do not hesitate to contact my office. Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.