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Testimony  
Before the Subcommittee on National Parks  
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the potential  
extension of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail  
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Thank you, Chairman Pearce and members of the House Subcommittee on National Parks, for taking time to consider additional testimony in the hearing on the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the potential extension of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Interest in the stories of the expedition and the route it traveled is widespread throughout this country. The Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation's 5,000 members live in all 50 states and our 40 chapters are spread along the trail and beyond to states such as Florida, Texas and California. We host our annual meeting at sites along the trail, including Louisville, Philadelphia and Charlottesville; sites that are not part of the federally designated national historic trail, but are an integral part of the route traveled by the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

The National Trails System Act states that national historic trails "will be extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance."

Scholars conclusively agree that the Lewis and Clark Expedition started at Monticello, where President Jefferson conceived the plan and outlined his instructions for Meriwether Lewis. From the moment Lewis embarked on his quest for supplies, provisions and men to accompany him, the journey had begun. It did not end until Lewis and William Clark's final report reached Jefferson. Not including these segments of the journey in the national historic trail disregards key elements of the story and this nation's heritage.

The route from Monticello to the Pacific Ocean and back to Washington, D.C., is the route of America's first official exploratory expedition and a significant component of this country's heritage. We urge you to support extension of the trail to include this entire route of national historic significance and meet the intentions of the National Trails System Act.

Since 1969, our members have shared the stories of Lewis and Clark in classrooms and communities throughout the country. Families have traveled thousands of miles along the trail to walk in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, enjoy the vistas of the trail and gain an understanding of what the Corps of Discovery experienced 200 years ago. They are missing the beginning and the end of this great American adventure.

People who live along the trail take great pride in sharing their part of the expedition's history. Their community pride is evident in their commitment to excellence and the manner they welcome visitors. Communities all along the trail have become destinations for travelers. Those communities have become part of the trail's history. By extending the trail, you will invite countless visitors to experience the Eastern Legacy of the expedition and communities from Clarksville, Indiana, to Washington, D.C., to contribute to the lasting legacies of the greatest of all American adventures.

The Foundation publishes the scholarly journal of record on Lewis and Clark, "We Proceeded On." We partner with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service in caring for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. In addition, the Foundation supports scholarship, education, and research on the Expedition, and is known worldwide as "Keepers of the Story and Stewards of the Trail."

The Foundation's top priority in its recently completed five-year strategic plan is extension of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. The plan has the full backing of our membership, who will actively support Congressional efforts to extend the trail.

We would appreciate your favorable consideration of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail Extension Act of 2006. Thank you for your time.