

STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, REGARDING H.R. 3651, A BILL TO FACILITATE THE USE OF CERTAIN LAND IN NEBRASKA FOR PUBLIC OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 3651, to facilitate the use of certain land in Nebraska for public outdoor recreational opportunities, and for other purposes.

The Department supports enactment of H.R. 3651. This legislation would provide authority to generate funds to help pay for the operations of the Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Visitor Center in Nebraska City without compromising the visitor experience and the interpretation of the significant history of Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery, and without adding to the operations costs of the National Park Service (NPS).

H.R. 3651 would allow the Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Trail and Visitor Center Foundation, Inc. (Foundation) to use, or enter into a lease or agreement to use, up to 40 of the 78 acres of the land that the Federal government conveyed to it for public outdoor recreation. The bill would impose several conditions on the use of the land, including one requiring that any revenue generated be used to offset the maintenance and operating costs of the Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Visitor Center (Center). Our understanding is that the Foundation would like to establish playing fields on the land.

The Foundation was incorporated in 1999 as a non-profit organization to facilitate fundraising for the Center. It has owned and managed the Center since 2009, when the NPS conveyed the 78-acre property containing the Center to the Foundation pursuant to Section 342 of Public Law 110-229. The conveyance was consistent with direction in the National Trails System Act to have trail visitor centers maintained by non-Federal entities, if possible. Section 342 also authorized appropriations of \$150,000 annually through 2018 to help pay for operating costs of the Center, but this funding was never appropriated specifically for the Center. Instead, the NPS has provided between \$140,000 and \$150,000 in funding from other sources, including the NPS regional office and the Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail, to help support the Center.

The Lewis and Clark National Historical Trail, which commemorates and interprets the Corps of Discovery's cross-continent journey from 1802-1804, tells one of our nation's most fascinating and enduring stories of courage, adventure, and discovery. Just last year, as part of the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act (P.L. 116-9), the trail was expanded to include approximately 1,200 miles in the eastern United States where the Corps' journey began. This "Eastern Legacy" expansion helps complete the commemoration of this remarkable story but it also increases the cost of administering the trail. Partly as a result of this expansion, the NPS expects it to be increasingly difficult to continue providing funding for the Center.

The Foundation collects entrance and special use fees to supplement donations for operations and maintenance of the Center. This income has consistently fallen short of operational needs, and the Foundation has indicated that it can no longer support the operation of the Center. Under the law conveying the property to the Foundation, the property will revert to the United States if the Foundation discontinues use of the land as a historic site and interpretive center. The NPS does not want to operate the Center in Nebraska City, as we currently administer the headquarters and a visitor center for Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail in Omaha, about 50 miles away from Nebraska City. If the Center property were to revert to the United States, the Department would recommend that it be turned over to the General Services Administration for disposal.

The Center is a valuable community asset to Nebraska City, and it serves its purpose of interpreting a critically important part of American history. We would like to see the Center succeed without continued Federal funding. This legislation offers a reasonable way to potentially achieve that goal.

Finally, before any action is taken on H.R. 3651, we would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on some clarifying amendments to the bill.

Chair Haaland, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS ON H.R. 3681, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE GREEN SPACES, GREEN VEHICLES INITIATIVE TO FACILITATE THE INSTALLATION OF ZERO-EMISSIONS VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE ON NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM LAND, NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM LAND, AND CERTAIN RELATED LAND, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

February 27, 2020

Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 3681, a bill to establish the Green Spaces, Green Vehicles Initiative to facilitate the installation of zero-emissions vehicle infrastructure on National Forest System land, National Park System land, and certain related land, and for other purposes.

The Department appreciates efforts to enhance access to national parks and public lands, and is currently working with partners to meet the needs of those visitors who use electric vehicles. However, the Department does not support H.R. 3681 as the National Park Service (NPS) already has the authorities provided in this legislation, and needs to utilize resources to reduce the NPS deferred maintenance backlog and address other critical infrastructure needs.

H.R. 3681 would require the Department of Energy, the NPS, and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to collaborate on an initiative to facilitate the installation and use of zero-emission vehicle infrastructure in national parks, forests, and nearby communities by entering into agreements to acquire, install, and operate charging or fueling infrastructure for zero-emission vehicles; acquiring zero-emission fleet vehicles; providing information to the public such as maps and station availability; and allowing for employee use of charging infrastructure. In determining the location for zero-emission vehicle infrastructure, H.R. 3681 would require the agencies to complement, to the extent feasible, the alternative fuel corridor networks established by the Federal Highway Administration. The bill would authorize up to \$50 million per year for this initiative.

H.R. 3681 would require the NPS and USFS to give priority consideration, when entering into an agreement for shuttle or other transportation services, to an entity with zero-emission vehicles. The bill would require the agencies to develop a strategy to, by 2030, increase the number of zero-emission vehicles in the fleet by either 125 percent or to a number that is 25 percent of the total fleet, whichever is greater.

This legislation is unnecessary, as the NPS currently has the statutory authority provided in this bill, including installing infrastructure to fuel or charge electric vehicles and acquiring electric vehicles in the fleet. Efforts to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the national parks have been underway since the first major auto manufacturers began offering electric vehicle models. With electric vehicles becoming a more viable transportation option for park

visitors as a result of increased battery ranges, there is increased demand for electric vehicle charging stations at national parks. To this end, the NPS has partnered with and completed charging installation efforts with several organizations.

Recently, BMW of North America, the National Park Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the NPS entered into a partnership for the installation of 100 electric vehicle charging stations at locations in and near national parks across the country. Overall, with the installation of the first electric vehicle charging station under this program at Thomas Edison National Historical Park, and including other initiatives, almost 150 charging stations have been installed system-wide, including in Death Valley National Park, Big Cypress National Preserve, Yellowstone National Park, and Cape Cod National Seashore. The NPS is also currently working with the California Energy Commission to complete additional electric vehicle charging installations at national parks in California.

Several parks have also added electric vehicle charging to support fleet vehicles. In 2019, more than a dozen all-electric cars and motorcycles were added to the US Park Police fleet, made possible through a partnership between the NPS and the Department of Energy. These vehicles provide transportation to law enforcement officers and staff in and around the National Mall and its memorials and monuments. In addition, the NPS has replaced some older diesel buses that shuttle visitors to and through national parks with new electric buses. Yosemite National Park recently procured two electric buses and other parks are considering the acquisition of electric buses for the 58 shuttle bus and tram systems currently operating in national parks.

Rather than mandate an unnecessary new program, the Department urges Congress to address the aging infrastructure and maintenance backlog facing the NPS. The President's 2021 budget again includes a proposal to establish the Public Lands Infrastructure Fund to address the backlog of deferred maintenance on our public lands. One of our highest priorities is to address the crumbling roads, bridges, water systems, and facilities within the national park system.

Chair Haaland, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS ON H.R. 4236, A BILL TO ENCOURAGE RECYCLING AND REDUCTION OF DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BOTTLES IN UNITS OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

February 27, 2020

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 4236, a bill to encourage recycling and reduction of disposable plastic bottles in units of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department does not support enactment of H.R. 4236.

H.R. 4236 would require each National Park Service (NPS) regional director to establish a program for recycling and reducing disposable plastic bottles within park units, including eliminating the sale of water in disposable plastic bottles in park units if several factors are considered. H.R. 4236 would also require each regional director to develop a visitor education strategy to establish visitor expectations of water availability and explain the disposable plastic bottle recycling and reduction program. The disposable plastic bottle recycling and reduction program would need to be incorporated into agreements with organizations operating within the National Park System units, including concessioners and cooperating associations. Not less than every two years, each regional director would be required to evaluate the recycling and reduction of disposable plastic bottles using criteria included in the proposed legislation.

Encouraging recycling and the reduction of waste at national park units has been a goal for the NPS. Since 1998, it has been the Department's policy that each of its bureaus develop, implement, and conduct thorough recycling programs that assure compliance with the spirit and intent of applicable Federal, State, and local recycling requirements and provisions; promote sound environmental practices by preventing pollution and recovering resources through recycling; and educate and monitor for recycling participation at all of its activities, including those of contractors and concessioners.

In 2011, the NPS instituted a program similar to that proposed in H.R. 4236, encouraging park managers to eliminate the sales of water in disposable plastic bottles, with the installation of water bottle filling stations in parks as one of the key pre-conditions to implementation. However, the NPS rescinded this effort after a few years in 2017 in order to expand hydration choices for visitors. The program, which sought to eliminate sales of bottled water in fact removed the healthiest beverage choice while still allowing sales of bottled sweetened drinks, and did not result in a marked reduction in waste in the 23 parks that installed the program. Rescinding the sales ban allowed visitors to decide for themselves how to best stay hydrated during a park visit. Parks continue to promote the recycling of disposable plastic water bottles and many parks have worked with partners to provide free potable water in the bottle filling stations located at visitor centers and near trailheads.

From composting and dedicated recycling bins to water bottle filling stations to Propane Bottle Recycler machines which prepare lantern and camp stove fuel bottles for recycling, the NPS continues to implement new and innovative approaches to reduce waste in our landfills. In 2018, the NPS achieved a nearly 40 percent service-wide waste diversion rate, diverting approximately 26,000 tons of waste from our landfills. Many NPS sites utilize interpretive kiosks and active interpretive programs to inform and educate park visitors on the benefits of recycling, reducing and composting waste.

Chairwoman Haaland, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF LENA MCDOWALL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, REGARDING H.R. 4512, A BILL TO PROVIDE GRANTS FOR PROJECTS TO ACQUIRE LAND AND WATER FOR PARKS AND OTHER OUTDOOR RECREATION PURPOSES AND TO DEVELOP NEW OR RENOVATE EXISTING OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES.

FEBRUARY 27, 2020

Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 4512, a bill to provide grants for projects to acquire land and water for parks and other outdoor recreation purposes and to develop new or renovate existing outdoor recreation facilities.

The Department does not support enactment of H.R. 4512, as it is not consistent with the Administration's proposal for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) State and Local Assistance program in the President's proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2021. In addition, enactment of this bill would eliminate the flexibility to change the existing Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) program as funding needs for outdoor recreation change.

The LWCF State and Local Assistance Program, established by Congress in 1964, authorizes grants to States, and through States to local units of government and Federally-recognized Indian tribes, for projects that will provide outdoor recreation opportunities to the public through the acquisition of lands and waters for parks and other outdoor recreation areas, as well as through the new development or renovation of outdoor recreation facilities. The LWCF State and Local Assistance program is operated by the National Park Service (NPS) in partnership with designated lead state agencies in each of the 50 states as well as American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, Northern Marianas Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Each year, a portion of the revenues authorized by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) (P.L. 109-432), along with any funding from the LWCF that Congress appropriates for the state grant program, is allocated to the states and territories based on a statutory formula. Projects are selected by the states in accordance with an NPS-approved statewide outdoor recreation plan.

The ORLP program was developed in response to language in the explanatory report accompanying P.L. 113-76, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014. That language directed the NPS to establish a nationwide competitive grant program as a complementary addition to the formula-based LWCF State and Local Assistance Program. The NPS developed the program in consultation with members of Congress, its state partners, and nongovernmental interest groups. A primary objective of this program was to provide grants to large densely-populated urban areas that typically have significant needs but were often deterred from competing for the LWCF formula-based grants due to the grant ceilings in many states that were typically lower than they have been recently.

Similar to the formula-based LWCF State and Local Assistance program, the ORLP program provides matching grants for acquisition and development of land for outdoor recreation purposes. However, the ORLP program specifically targets projects that will create or substantially renovate parks in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more people that are underserved in terms of parks and other outdoor recreation resources. The program includes a focus on the needs of low-income communities and on projects that will have ancillary economic benefits such as the creation of new jobs.

Congress has appropriated funds for ORLP every year since 2014, with a total of \$98 million through FY 2020. By comparison, a total of \$834.7 million has been appropriated for the State and Local Grant program during the same period. As with formula grants, state partners play a key role in helping to solicit and identify appropriate projects and ultimately serve as the lead recipient for any grant. Projects that are approved must meet one or more priorities of a state's outdoor recreation plan and are subject to LWCF Act provisions such as the protection from conversion to uses other than recreation.

HR. 4512 would enact in statute the ORLP program largely as it is currently structured but would make significant changes to the way projects are funded and prioritized.

Currently, the ORLP program is funded from discretionary LWCF appropriations. H.R. 4512 would redirect 20 percent of the GOMESA revenues that are currently mandated by law to be used for the LWCF State and Local Assistance formula grants for the ORLP program (up to \$25 million per year). The President's budget proposal for FY 2021 calls for allocating the entire \$117 million in estimated FY 2020 GOMESA revenues for LWCF State and Local Assistance for the formula-based program. Enactment of H.R. 4512 would result in all states and territories receiving a reduced allocation of funding from GOMESA based on an estimated \$93 million in revenue, rather than \$117 million. That difference would mean significantly less funding for local recreation projects throughout the country.

Although as noted, the ORLP program was initially established with urban areas as a focus, the fact that the program's purposes, priorities, and criteria for eligibility are not set in statute allows the flexibility to adjust the program as needs change. For example, given the LWCF State and Local Assistance program funding levels since FY 2016, we are finding that larger urban areas are more likely to apply for formula-based LWCF grants than they were in FY 2014 and prior years when funding was significantly less. As a result, we have had some discussion with our partners and other stakeholders about whether the current focus on densely populated urban areas continues to be the most relevant and effective use of ORLP funding. We think there would be a benefit to maintaining flexibility to allow the Department to work with Congress to make adjustments in the program that respond to changing conditions.

Additionally, H.R. 4512 would significantly increase the number of jurisdictions eligible for ORLP grants. This change would occur because the bill's definition of a "Qualifying Urban Area" is "an area identified by the Census Bureau as an 'Urban Area' in the most recent census." This definition would include both "Urbanized Areas" (50,000+ residents) as well as "Urban Clusters" (2,500 to 49,999 residents). Currently, there are 486 Urbanized Areas eligible for the ORLP program. Under H.R. 4512, the pool of eligible localities would expand to also include

the approximately 3,800 Urban Clusters. Not only would this change diminish the focus of the program on larger urban areas, it would also result in an applicant pool that would be less distinguishable from the current formula-based grant applicant pool and would increase duplication with the formula-based program.

Chair Haaland, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.