

**STATEMENT OF TOM MEDEMA, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND VOLUNTEERS, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND
PUBLIC LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 268, A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR THE
BOUNDARY OF THE PALO ALTO BATTLEFIELD NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK TO
BE ADJUSTED, TO AUTHORIZE THE DONATION OF LAND TO THE UNITED
STATES FOR ADDITION TO THAT HISTORIC PARK, AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES.**

November 9, 2021

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 268, a bill to provide for the boundary of the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park to be adjusted, to authorize the donation of land to the United States for addition to that historic park, and for other purposes.

The Department supports the goals of this legislation and sharing the story of Fort Brown with the American people. However, because the National Park Service has not studied the appropriateness and feasibility of adding Fort Brown to the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park, as proposed in H.R. 268, the Department recommends amending this bill to include authorization for a boundary study, and to authorize the Secretary to accept the property pending a favorable outcome to that boundary study.

H.R. 268 would add the approximately 166 acres of land where Fort Brown stood to the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park. The land, which is owned and administered by the International Boundary and Water Commission, holds the archeological remains of Fort Brown, including the standing ruins of the Fort Brown earthworks, associated fortifications, and the cultural landscape of the Fort Brown siege of 1846. The fort, originally known as Fort Texas, was established when U.S. soldiers led by General Zachary Taylor arrived on the banks of the Rio Grande to establish the river as the southern boundary of Texas. General Taylor, who would become the 12th President of the United States in 1849, re-named the fort in honor of Major Jacob Brown, who was killed during the siege.

A portion of the Fort Brown site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960. It is one of three battlefield sites in the Brownsville area considered key to telling the story of the 1846-48 United States war with Mexico. The other two sites are currently included within Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park.

Fort Brown became the flashpoint in a dispute over the boundary between the two nations. As events unfolded, the Mexican Army laid siege to the fort in early May of 1846. The site remained active following the war with Mexico and played a role in every U.S. war through World War II. The U.S. Army closed Fort Brown in 1944 and turned the 166-acre area over to the International Boundary and Water Commission in 1949 for flood control purposes.

If the Committee chooses to act on H.R. 268, the Department recommends amending the bill to include authorization for a boundary study to look at the feasibility of administering the Fort Brown site as part of Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park. It is a standard practice of the National Park Service to conduct a study for a proposed major addition to a unit of the National Park System before recommending additions to an existing park. As part of this study, the National Park Service collects information about the quality of resources in the study area, evaluates the potential for visitor enjoyment and efficient management, and considers the feasibility and appropriateness of different management options for the site. A study would also evaluate the views of and impacts on local communities, the adequacy of other alternatives for management and resource protection, and other factors. We also would recommend a technical amendment to correct the park name used in the title of the bill from “Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Park” to “Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park.” If Congress chooses to act on this legislation, we would like to work with you on these amendments.

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

**STATEMENT OF TOM MEDEMA, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND VOLUNTEERS, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND
PUBLIC LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 1469, A BILL TO AMEND THE WILD AND
SCENIC RIVERS ACT TO DESIGNATE CERTAIN RIVER SEGMENTS WITHIN THE
YORK WATERSHED IN THE STATE OF MAINE AS COMPONENTS OF THE
NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

November 9, 2021

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior (Department) on H.R. 1469, a bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain river segments within the York watershed in the State of Maine as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 1469.

H.R. 1469 would designate eight segments of the York River totaling 30.8 miles as part of the System, to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior as a recreational river. The segments would be managed in accordance with the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan, prepared in 2018 as a part of the National Park Service's study of the York River, with the Secretary coordinating administration and management with a locally based stewardship committee, as specified in the plan. The bill would authorize the Secretary to enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Maine, the municipalities of Eliot, Kittery, South Berwick, and York, and appropriate local, regional, or State planning, environmental, or recreational organizations. The legislation follows the model of other recent New England Wild and Scenic Rivers designations based on a "partnership" model emphasizing locally based management solutions and a limited federal role.

The study of the York River was authorized by P.L. 113-291, the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015. The National Park Service conducted the study in close cooperation with the adjoining communities, the State of Maine, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, and other interested local parties. Technical assistance provided as a part of the study made possible the development of the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan. This plan is based primarily around local partner actions designed to guide the stewardship of certain segments of the York River with or without a National Wild and Scenic Rivers designation. The draft York Wild and Scenic River Study Report was made available for public review and comment from January 10 to April 10, 2020. Public comments received on the draft were overwhelmingly in support of designation. The Final Study report, transmitted to Congress on July 13, 2021, found that the approximately 30.8

miles of the York River and its major tributaries are eligible and suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as recreational.

If H.R. 1469 is enacted, segments of the York River and its tributaries would be administered as a partnership wild and scenic river, similar to several other designations in the Northeast, including the upper Farmington River and the Eightmile River in Connecticut, and the Lamprey River in New Hampshire.

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

**STATEMENT OF TOM MEDEMA, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND VOLUNTEERS, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND
PUBLIC LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 2512, A BILL TO DESIGNATE THE
CHISHOLM NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL AND THE WESTERN NATIONAL
HISTORIC TRAIL AS PART OF THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES.**

November 9, 2021

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior (Department) on H.R. 2512, a bill to amend the National Trails System Act, and designate the Chisholm National Historic Trail and the Western National Historic Trail, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 2512 and the designation of the Chisholm National Historic Trail and Western National Historic Trail with technical amendments. The Department recognizes the important contribution to America's ranching story that is represented by the Chisholm National Historic Trail and the Western National Historic Trail. The development and intensive use of these trails played an important role in the economic recovery of Texas and other western States following the Civil War.

H.R. 2512 would establish the Chisholm National Historic Trail and the Western National Historic Trail and allows the Secretary of the Interior to administer the trails as a single administrative unit. The National Park Service (NPS) conducted a national historic trail feasibility study in accordance with the National Trails System Act and associated criteria. The NPS completed civic engagement and public review stages of the Chisholm and Great Western Historic Trails Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment in January 2015 and noted public support. Also, during the study in 2012, the National Park System Advisory Board concurred that the trail routes and themes were historically and nationally significant. The final feasibility study was transmitted to Congress in May 2019 and found the trails to be eligible for designation to the National Trails System.

The trails include approximately 2,548 miles of routes passing through the States of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska as generally depicted on the maps numbered as 1 through 6 in the national trail feasibility study entitled "Chisholm and Great Western National Historic Trails Feasibility Study/Environmental Assessment" and dated May 2019. Following designation, the Department of the Interior would delegate the trails to the agency that would serve as the federal national trail administrator, likely the NPS as recommended in the feasibility study. The comprehensive plan would then be initiated, pending appropriations, for the trails to guide administration, management, and coordination among partners of both trails towards the goals of national historic trail components of the National Trails System for the American public.

If the Committee decides to act on this legislation, we would like to work with you on technical amendments to H.R. 2512.

Chairman Neguse, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

**STATEMENT OF TOM MEDEMA, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND VOLUNTEERS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE
ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 4358,
A BILL TO AMEND THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT TO DESIGNATE
SEGMENTS OF THE LITTLE MANATEE RIVER IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA AS A
COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM, AND
FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's (Department) views on H.R. 4358, a bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate segments of the Little Manatee River as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

The Department recognizes the importance of protecting free-flowing rivers for the enjoyment of present and future generations. However, because the National Park Service has not studied the segments of the Little Manatee River to be designated by this bill, the Department recommends amending this legislation to authorize the National Park Service to complete a wild and scenic river study on these river segments.

H.R. 4358 would amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the approximately 50-mile segment beginning at the source in southeastern Hillsborough County, Florida, downstream to the point at which the river enters Tampa Bay, including appropriate tributaries, to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior as a scenic river. The bill also identifies segments of the river that would not be included in the designation.

Most rivers are added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System through federal designation legislation after a study of the river's eligibility and suitability is completed by one of the four federal agencies responsible for the management of wild and scenic rivers. Congress may authorize a study by amending Section 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. A study provides the opportunity to evaluate the river's eligibility, classification, and suitability. Eligibility is an evaluation of whether a candidate river is free-flowing and possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable values. The suitability determination is based on the extent of public support, feasibility of managing the river to protect its values, and consistency with other public uses of the waterway. A study allows for engagement with the public (including landowners), as well as local, State, and tribal governments. The study would be completed in close cooperation with the State of Florida, as appropriate. Upon completion, the Secretary transmits a final study report, including findings of eligibility and suitability and potential classification, to Congress for consideration.

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Secretary would be required to complete a Comprehensive River Management Plan three years after designation. If H.R. 4358 is amended to authorize a study, the Comprehensive River Management Plan may be prepared concurrently

during the 5(a)-study period. This can be especially beneficial if large areas of nonfederal lands exist within the proposed designation or study area, as in the case of the Little Manatee.

We would appreciate the opportunity to study the river to evaluate the river's eligibility, classification, and suitability for designation including providing an opportunity for public comment. If amended, the Department would like to work with the Committee on language to address the study, including its scope and timing.

Chairman Neguse, this concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department's views on this legislation.

**STATEMENT OF TOM MEDEMA, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND VOLUNTEERS, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND
PUBLIC LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 4404, A BILL TO AMEND THE WILD AND
SCENIC RIVERS ACT TO DESIGNATE SEGMENTS OF THE KISSIMMEE RIVER IN
THE STATE OF FLORIDA AS A COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL WILD AND
SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's (Department) views on H.R. 4404, a bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate segments of the Kissimmee River in the State of Florida as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

The Department recognizes the importance of protecting free-flowing rivers for the enjoyment of present and future generations. However, because the National Park Service has not studied the segments of the Kissimmee River to be designated by this bill, the Department recommends amending this legislation to authorize the National Park Service to complete a wild and scenic river study on these river segments.

H.R. 4404 would amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the restored segment of the Kissimmee River, beginning approximately 16 miles downstream of Lake Kissimmee and ending approximately 15 miles upstream of Lake Okeechobee, to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior as a scenic river.

Most rivers are added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System through federal designation legislation after a study of the river's eligibility and suitability is completed by one of the four federal agencies responsible for the management of wild and scenic rivers. Congress may authorize a study by amending Section 5(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. A study provides the opportunity to evaluate the river's eligibility, classification, and suitability. Eligibility is an evaluation of whether a candidate river is free-flowing and possesses one or more outstandingly remarkable values. The suitability determination is based on the extent of public support, feasibility of managing the river to protect its values, and consistency with other public uses of the waterway. A study allows for engagement with the public (including landowners), as well as local, State, and tribal governments. The study would be completed in close cooperation with the State of Florida, as appropriate. Upon completion, the Secretary transmits a final study report, including findings of eligibility and suitability and potential classification, to Congress for consideration.

Under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Secretary would be required to complete a Comprehensive River Management Plan three years after designation. If H.R. 4404 is amended to authorize a study, the Comprehensive River Management Plan may be prepared concurrently

during the 5(a)-study period. This can be especially beneficial if large areas of nonfederal lands exist within the proposed designation or study area, as in the case of the Kissimmee.

This year, the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the Kissimmee River Restoration Project to restore more than 40 square miles of the river floodplain ecosystem, 20,000 acres of wetlands, and 44 miles of the historic river channel. The Department recognizes the significant restoration work that has been undertaken. We would appreciate the opportunity to study the river to evaluate the river's eligibility, classification, and suitability for designation including providing an opportunity for public comment. If amended, the Department would like to work with the Committee on language to address the study, including its scope and timing.

Chairman Neguse, this concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department's views on this legislation.

Statement for the Record

**Bureau of Land Management
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
H.R. 980, Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act
November 9, 2021**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement for the record on H.R. 980, the Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act. The bill would withdraw 5,215 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and 95,806 acres of National Forest System lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) from operation of the public land, mining, and mineral and geothermal leasing laws.

The lands to be withdrawn include the Hunter Creek and North Fork Pistol River headwaters and the Rough and Ready Creek and Baldface Creek watersheds. The lands also border or are near the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. The Department understands that the purpose of the withdrawal is to protect important habitat of threatened and endangered aquatic and botanical resources. The Department supports H.R. 980.

Background

In southwestern Oregon, the BLM manages approximately 1.2 million acres of public lands through the Coos Bay and Medford District Offices. The BLM works closely with the State of Oregon, Tribal governments, counties, and cities, as well as local communities to ensure the sustainable management of these lands and their multiple uses. The lands provide a wide variety of uses, ranging from timber production to recreational opportunities and critical wildlife habitat. A high number of threatened, endangered, and sensitive aquatic and botanical species are known to occur throughout the area. Mining has been identified as a primary threat to a number of these botanical species and could pose harm to the threatened salmon species within these waters.

Withdrawal Area

The lands proposed for withdrawal under H.R. 980 are generally known as the Klamath Mountains, and their defining characteristic is the North Fork of the Smith River, which originates in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness and drains most of the area under consideration for withdrawal. Once it crosses the Oregon-California state line, the Smith River is the largest free-flowing river system in California. Creeks that feed into the North Fork and other rivers that flow to the Oregon Coast offer unique ecological features stemming from the confluence of the Coast Range, Cascades, and Siskiyou Mountains. A high concentration of rare plants, forested trails, and scenic views are all emblematic of these drainages. Rough and Ready Creek and Baldface Creek are listed as eligible for National Wild and Scenic River designation by the Forest Service.

Administrative Withdrawal

On December 30, 2016, these lands were administratively withdrawn for 20 years by Public Land Order 7859 for the purpose of protecting the lands while Congress considered a permanent legislative

withdrawal. The current administrative withdrawal protects all valid existing rights, including those under the mining and mineral leasing laws. Existing mining claims may be developed if a mineral validity examination shows that a discovery of a valuable mineral deposit existed at the time of the withdrawal. Currently, there are 279 existing claims in the withdrawal areas, of which 234 are lode claims and 45 are placer claims.

H.R. 980

H.R. 980 would permanently withdraw 5,215 acres of BLM-managed public lands in the Coos Bay and Medford Districts and 95,806 acres of Forest Service lands in the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest from operation of the public land, mining, and mineral and geothermal leasing laws. The proposed withdrawal encompasses two areas near or bordering the Kalmiopsis Wilderness. These include the Hunter Creek and North Fork Pistol River headwaters and the Rough and Ready Creek and Baldface Creek watersheds.

The Department supports H.R. 980, which would ensure the protection of both the lands and resources within the area covered by the bill. The necessity of this protection is exemplified by the fact that within the lands proposed for withdrawal by H.R. 980, the BLM's 2016 Northwestern and Coastal Resource Management Plan and Southwestern Oregon Resource Management Plan identified five Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs): Hunter Creek Bog, North Fork Hunter Creek, West Fork Illinois River, Rough and Ready, and Woodcock Bog. The two Resource Management Plans also recommended the withdrawal of these five ACECs.

Additionally, included within the boundary of the withdrawal are approximately 1,680 acres of non-Federal land that are not currently affected by segregation or withdrawal. If these non-Federal acres enter into Federal ownership in the future, they would become subject to the terms and conditions of the withdrawal.

Finally, like the current administrative withdrawal, the permanent withdrawal proposed under H.R. 980 would not prohibit mining operations under existing notices or plans. Any preexisting exploration or mining operations would continue, but new mining claims would be prohibited. H.R. 980 also would not restrict existing recreational uses or forest management activities.

Conclusion

The BLM recognizes the importance of locally crafted recreation and conservation areas on public lands and waters. The BLM believes the most effective and enduring conservation strategies are those reflecting the priorities, needs, and perspectives of the families and communities that know, live, work, and care for the lands and waters. The BLM supports protecting these treasured lands for present and future generations.

**STATEMENT OF TOM MEDEMA, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND VOLUNTEERS, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND
PUBLIC LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 3600, A BILL TO AMEND THE NATIONAL
TRAILS SYSTEM ACT TO DESIGNATE THE ROUTE 66 NATIONAL HISTORIC
TRAIL, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 3600, to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Route 66 National Historic Trail, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 3600 with technical amendments. This legislation would establish the Route 66 National Historic Trail, to be administered by the National Park Service. The trail would include all alignments of the U.S. Highway 66 in existence from 1926 to 1985 along an approximately 2,400-mile route from Chicago, Illinois to Santa Monica, California. The bill authorizes land acquisition from willing sellers but includes language that limits acquisition to no more than an average of one-quarter of a mile on either side of the trail, consistent with land acquisition provisions in the National Trails System Act.

The National Park Service currently manages the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, established by Congress in 1999 and reauthorized in 2009 to recognize the contributions of Route 66 to American history. The proposed National Historic Trail would support the continued preservation and commemoration goals of the existing program, but in a manner that is consistent with the goals and criteria of the National Trails System Act.

Route 66 was designated in 1926 as part of the first U.S. Federal Highway System and came to exemplify the role of the automobile in the technological, transportation, and commercial development of the United States in the 20th century. Route 66 has become a powerful symbol of America's social, political, and economic mobility and freedom. Every year, thousands of visitors, many from other countries, come to experience the mid-20th century American automobile-centered culture represented by Route 66. These visitors are vital to the economies of the numerous rural communities through which the route passes.

Public Law 101-400, enacted in 1990, authorized the National Park Service to study options for preserving and commemorating the nationally significant Route 66. As part of this broad review of options, the National Park Service also conducted a feasibility study that determined that Route 66 met the criteria for designation as a National Historic Trail. Congress, however, declined to designate Route 66 as a National Historic Trail at that time, and opted instead to create the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. Recent public support for National Historic Trail status is substantial.

Through the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, authorized in 1999 by Public Law 106-45, the National Park Service supports the preservation efforts of the Route 66 corridor by providing technical assistance, participating in cost-sharing programs, and making grants in the eight states through which the route runs. The National Park Service also acts as a clearinghouse for communications among the various entities interested in the preservation of the Route 66 corridor, and assists these same entities in developing local preservation plans to guide efforts to protect the most important or representative resources of the corridor.

The National Park Service's FY21 budget included \$295,000 for the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. This funding has been relatively stable over the life of the program, and the National Park Service anticipates providing similar funding if the program were to be designated as a National Historic Trail.

If the Committee decides to act on this legislation, we would like to work with you on technical amendments to H.R. 3600 to assure conformity with the National Trails System Act.

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

**STATEMENT OF TOM MEDEMA, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR,
INTERPRETATION, EDUCATION, AND VOLUNTEERS, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND
PUBLIC LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 4494, A BILL TO AUTHORIZE THE
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO ACQUIRE LAND IN FREDERICK COUNTY,
MARYLAND, FOR THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION TRAINING CENTER OF THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

NOVEMBER 9, 2021

Chairman Neguse, Ranking Member Fulcher, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 4494 to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land in Frederick County, Maryland, for the Historic Preservation Training Center of the National Park Service, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 4494, which would provide a permanent site for the Historic Preservation Training Center.

H.R. 4494 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to further develop the Historic Preservation Training Center (Center) in accordance with section 305306 of title 54, United States Code, by acquiring land not to exceed 20 acres in Frederick County, Maryland, to support the physical space, preservation operations, training program initiatives, and workforce development capacity of the Center.

The Center, originally established in 1977 in Williamsport, Maryland, supports the National Park Service (NPS) through historic preservation projects and teaches traditional trade skills and historic preservation techniques through hands-on experiential learning opportunities. As carpenters, masons, woodcrafters, metalsmiths, and other traditional trade masters retire, the Center provides apprenticeship programs to engage youth and veterans so that these important skills are passed down and not lost.

Over the last five years, the Center's Traditional Trades Apprenticeship Program has engaged over 170 youth and veteran interns in completing preservation and deferred maintenance projects across the NPS. Veterans make up over 25% of the interns, with over half of all participants being placed in NPS positions after completing their training. The Center also runs the National Career Academy for Facility Maintenance and supports over 2,500 current NPS employees in providing training for key occupations such as Water/Wastewater Treatment Operators and Heavy Equipment Operators.

The Center staff preserves some of our most treasured historic resources, from mooring quays at Pearl Harbor National Memorial and log cabins on the Blue Ridge Parkway, to stone repairs at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Since 1980, the Center staff and interns have completed approximately 1,500 projects in over 200 parks Service-wide. The teams worked on nearly 330 buildings and structures dating from the 18th through the 21st century, with the oldest being 312 years old.

While in Williamsport, the buildings utilized by the Center experienced a series of floods. In 1991, Congress directed the NPS to identify a permanent home. An NPS study team surveyed available sites and recommended Frederick, Maryland, and possibly Monocacy National Battlefield.

In 1995, the Center administrative offices were relocated to the Gambrill House at Monocacy National Battlefield. In 1997, the workshop portion of the facilities moved to a leased space at the Jenkins Cannery factory and warehouse, owned by the City of Frederick. The current lease with the City expires in September 2023, and the space can no longer accommodate the needs of the Center. We greatly appreciate the support of the City and consider them a valued partner. This legislation would support a continued partnership with the City, enable the NPS to attain an adequately sized space for operations, and establish a permanent home for this essential facility.

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