

STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 306, TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY OF THE SITE OF THE KETTLE CREEK BATTLEFIELD IN WILKES COUNTY, GEORGIA, AND ADJACENT PROPERTY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

APRIL 2, 2019

Chairwoman Haaland, Ranking Member Young, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 306, a bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special resource study of the site of the Kettle Creek Battlefield in Wilkes County, Georgia, and adjacent property, and for other purposes.

The Department recognizes that Kettle Creek Battlefield represents an important story in American history. However, we do not think that this battlefield site is a good candidate subject for a special resource study, and therefore we do not support enactment of H.R. 306. In addition, Congress has previously authorized 30 studies to determine if certain areas or resources meet the appropriate criteria for designation as new park units, national heritage areas, national trails, or wild and scenic rivers that the National Park Service has not yet completed. Only a few weeks ago, nine of those studies were authorized as part of Public Law 116-9. At a time that the Administration needs to use resources to reduce the National Park Service's \$11.9 billion deferred maintenance backlog and address other critical national park needs, the Department is not in a position to spend additional funds on conducting even more studies.

Kettle Creek Battlefield is the site of one of the few victories in Georgia by forces opposed to British rule during the American Revolutionary War. The battlefield marks the location of a February 14, 1779, engagement between 700-800 North and South Carolina Tories (British loyalists), under the direction of Col. James Boyd, and 400 Georgia patriots under the command of Col. Andrew Pickens, Col. John Dooly, and Lt. Col. Elijah Clarke. The patriots led a successful surprise attack, and the entire battle was concluded in less than two hours.

In 1975, Kettle Creek Battlefield, consisting of a 40-acre parcel, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In 2014, the National Historic Landmark Program received a request that the battlefield site be considered for designation as a National Historic Landmark. The National Historic Landmarks Program concluded that, despite its listing on the National Register for national significance, the battlefield site did not meet the criteria for designation as a National Historic Landmark. The program found that although the battle is important as one of many skirmishes in the South which collectively eroded British resistance, this particular battle was not a decisive one in the history of the American Revolution.

To establish the relative merit of this property for potential National Historic Landmark designation, other properties designated as National Historic Landmarks on the basis of their

association with the American Revolution would also have to be taken into consideration. Compared to other important military milestones of the American Revolution – such as the Battle of Kings Mountain, which marked the turning point of the war in the south, or the Battle of Guilford Courthouse, which marked the height of British Operations during the Southern Campaign – the Battle of Kettle Creek does not rise to a comparable level of national significance.

For a property to meet National Historic Landmark criteria, particularly within a military context where its significance is measured against all other battles and campaigns fought throughout that war, it must constitute a significant turning point or watershed moment. Although the Battle of Kettle Creek was one of many skirmishes that, collectively, contributed towards eroding British resistance, it does not on its own constitute a defining moment of the war. For this reason, we do not believe the Kettle Creek Battlefield is a good candidate subject for a special resource study.

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