

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the sub-committee.

My name is Pamela Bain and I am the Chairman of the Board of Los Compadres, the non-profit Friends' group to the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. Joining me today, is Susan Chandoha, our Executive Director.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you in support of HR 3100, introduced by Congressman Francisco Canseco and co-sponsored by Congressman Henry Cuellar, Congressman Charles Gonzalez and Congressman Lamar Smith.

This legislation is needed to adjust the Park's boundary to include acreage that 1) it already owns; 2) will receive through donation or land swap; and 3) manage through cooperative agreement.

Congress last adjusted the park's boundary in 1991. At this time, they included about 22 acres that contained a remnant of the historic San Juan Dam and head gate to the San Juan Acequia, or irrigation system. These 22 acres were part of a 33-acre parcel owned by the state of Texas. In 1996, the State transferred the entire property to the park even though 11 acres were outside its boundary...these need to be included as the park has owned them for the past 16 year.

In 2002, Congress appropriated land acquisition funds to the Park to acquire 13 acres near Mission San José to protect the mission's connection to the river, even though they were outside the boundary. These have been in the park's ownership for 10 years.

The City also has plans to transfer 27 acres of land near San José and the Park's visitor center – from local public ownership to federal ownership.

Additionally, 75 acres south of Mission San Juan will be transferred to the Park as a donation or land swap as part of the Mission Reach River Improvements project. These properties are critical to the protection of the San Juan Acequia, which is now flowing after 60 years of being dry. The County, the City, the National Park Service and Los Compadres worked for 20 years to bring water back to this irrigation system. The majority of the funding of this major restoration project came from local public and private sources – the County, the City and Los Compadres.

The remaining 18 acres are properties that belong to the City of San Antonio and Bexar County and would be managed by cooperative agreement. Inclusion would protect the historic connection to the river which is currently being enhanced greatly with the Mission Reach River Improvements project.

Bexar County, the San Antonio River Authority, the San Antonio River Foundation, the City of San Antonio and the US Army Corps of Engineers are contributing a total of \$271 million to the redevelopment of the San Antonio River which include the creation of Mission Portals to re-connect the missions to the river. The National Park, through a series of cooperative agreements, works with each of these entities for the ongoing management of the missions.

Construction of the park's Spanish Colonial Demonstration Farm at Mission San Juan will be funded through this river project and Los Compadres will establish an endowment fund for its operation. This farm was a management objective in the Park's 1982 General Management Plan but was never funded. Yet more local funds for this national park.

The San Antonio Missions are both national and international treasures. They comprise the single largest concentration of Spanish Colonial resources in the United States and include the only 18<sup>th</sup> century continuously-functioning dam, irrigation system and aqueduct on the continent. The missions are living testimony to the pioneering spirit that established the Southwest and gave rise to our country's agricultural and ranching industries. As such, they have been placed on the United States tentative list for nomination as a World Heritage site.

From a business perspective, this national park is a significant economic generator for our city. Park visitation has increased over 761% since its creation and now has over 1.6 million annual visitors. And, as an American and Texan, I am committed to the preservation of our cultural heritage. I see these missions as more than architectural relics – they are the windows to our past and the foundation of our future.

Mr. Chairman and members of the sub-committee, we are testifying only to the boundary expansion part of this bill. While the other component is important, we feel that a study can wait but the expansion must happen now, especially since the Park already owns a large portion of the land outside of its boundary.

We now ask the federal government to assist in meeting our joint commitment to protect these resources for the future. We look forward to a continued successful relationship with you and the National Park Service.

Thank you for your consideration this morning.