

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Mark-Up Memorandum

March 14, 2016

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Aniela Butler and Terry Camp
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x 6-7736)

Mark-Up: H.R. 1621 (Rep. Randy Forbes), To modify the boundary of Petersburg National Battlefield in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and for other purposes.
March 15 & 16, 2016; 1324 Longworth HOB.

H.R. 1621 (Rep. Randy Forbes), To modify the boundary of Petersburg National Battlefield in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and for other purposes.

Bill Summary

H.R. 1621, introduced on March 25, 2015 by Congressman J. Randy Forbes (R-VA-04), is a bipartisan bill that authorizes the National Park Service (NPS) to acquire approximately 7,200 acres to expand the Petersburg National Battlefield in Petersburg, Virginia. The bill also exchanges administrative jurisdiction over two small parcels of land between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior and raises a limitation on the amount of acreage NPS can acquire of a specific parcel from 21 to 25 acres.

Cosponsors

Rep. Donald Beyer [D-VA-8] and Rep. Bobby Scott [D-VA-3]

Background

The Petersburg Campaign consisted of 26 major battles during which the Union Army attempted to capture the city of Petersburg, Virginia during the Civil War. From June 15, 1864 to April 2, 1865, the Union and Confederate armies battled across 576 square miles to secure access to five railroads that connected Petersburg to the Confederate capital, Richmond.¹ Petersburg served as the Confederate's main supply base and control of the railroads meant the Union could isolate Richmond and severely weaken the Confederacy. The eventual Union victory on April 2 lead General Robert E. Lee to abandon Richmond and head to Appomattox Court House where the Confederacy would surrender one week later on April 9, 1865.²

¹ Civil War Trust, "10 Facts about the Petersburg Campaign," <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/petersburg/10-facts-about-the-petersburg.html>

² Calkins, Chris, "Petersburg, The Wearing Down of Lee's Army," Civil War Trust, <http://www.civilwar.org/battlefields/petersburg/petersburg-history-articles/petersburgcalkins.html>

H.R. 1621 allows for the expansion of the Petersburg National Battlefield to include 7,238 new acres across 12 different battle areas. After the site's creation in 1926, the official boundaries only included a small portion of the battles fought during the Campaign.³ Residential and commercial development near the park increased NPS concerns that the integrity of many battle sites would be compromised in the future. After assessing the significance, integrity, and interpretability of several battle sites, NPS recommended that 12 new battle sites be included in the park's boundaries. These battles were all either decisive or major and had a "direct, observable impact on the direction, duration, conduct, or outcome" on the Campaign or War.⁴

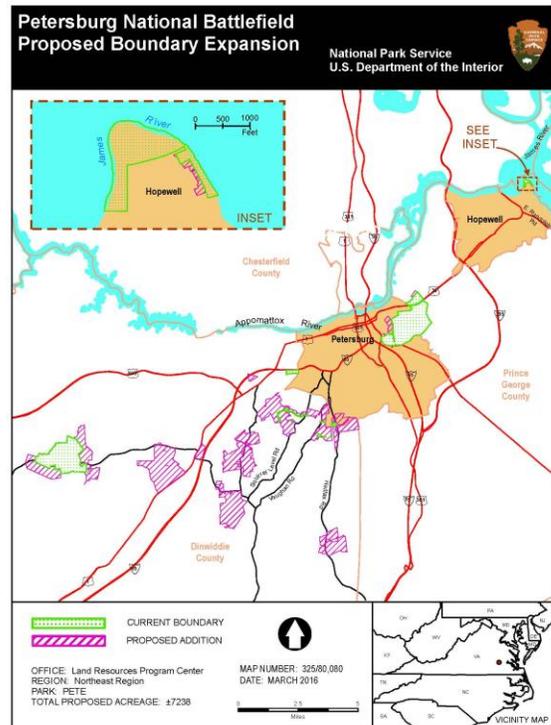
A second provision of the bill transfers an equal amount of acreage between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior near the Battlefield. The Department of the Army will acquire 1.17 acres of land that includes a gated entrance to Fort Lee in exchange for transferring 1.17 acres of land historically relevant to the Battlefield to NPS.

A third provision modifies a limitation on the amount of acreage NPS can acquire at the City Point unit in Hopewell from 21 to 25 acres. In 1987, Congress authorized NPS to acquire no more than 21 acres of property owned by The Conservation Fund to expand the Petersburg National Battlefield. Modifying this limitation to 25 acres would allow NPS to acquire the entire parcel from The Conservation Fund and potentially facilitate a land exchange that would allow NPS to dispose of land that does not add to the park's mission or enhance interpretation of the site.

A version of this bill passed the House by unanimous consent in 2009 during the 111th Congress. A Senate companion bill, S. 718, is currently sponsored by both Virginia United States Senators.

Major Provisions of the Bill

- Revises the boundary of the Petersburg National Battlefield to include 7,238 acres across 12 battle areas



Map provided by the National Park Service, "Petersburg National Battlefield Proposed Boundary Expansion," Map Number 325/80,080.

³ NPS, "General Management Plan for the Petersburg National Battlefield," p. 21.

⁴ Decisive battles are defined as having a direct, observable impact on the direction, duration, conduct, or outcome of the war. Major battles are defined as having a direct, observable impact on the direction, duration, conduct, or outcome of the campaign. Ibid., p. 22

- Exchanges administrative jurisdiction over two 1.17 acre parcels of land between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior
- Increases the amount of land NPS can acquire at the City Point unit in Hopewell from 21 to 25 acres

Administration Position

In testimony during a legislative hearing in February 2016, NPS expressed support for the bill and offered the technical amendment explained below.⁵

Anticipated Amendments

During markup, Rep. Bishop will offer an amendment that makes technical corrections to update the map of the proposed boundary expansion and administrative jurisdiction change as well as clarify that the 1.17 acres of land transferred to the Army by NPS will not be included in the boundary of the Battlefield.

⁵ Testimony of Stephanie Toothman, Subcommittee on Federal Lands legislative hearing on H.R. 87, H.R. 295, H.R. 1621, and H.R. 2817, February 11, 2016, http://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/testimony_toothman.pdf