

**STATEMENT OF VICTOR W. KNOX, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND PUBLIC LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION OF THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REGARDING H.R. 1208, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE MANHATTAN PROJECT NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK IN OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE, LOS ALAMOS, NEW MEXICO, AND HANFORD, WASHINGTON, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**April 12, 2013**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 1208, a bill to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Hanford, Washington, and for other purposes.

The Administration supports H.R. 1208 with amendments. The development of the atomic bomb through the Manhattan Project was one of the most transformative events in our nation's history: it ushered in the atomic age, changed the role of the United States in the world community, and set the stage for the Cold War. This legislation would enable the National Park Service to work in partnership with the Department of Energy to ensure the preservation of key resources associated with the Manhattan Project and to increase public awareness and understanding of this consequential effort.

H.R. 1208 would require the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park as a unit of the National Park System within one year of enactment, during which time the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Energy would enter into an agreement on the respective roles of the two departments. The unit would consist of facilities and areas located in Oak Ridge, Los Alamos, and Hanford, as identified in the bill and determined by the Secretary of the Interior in consultation with the Secretary of Energy, except for the B Reactor National Historic Landmark in Hanford, which would be required to be included in the park. The National Historical Park would be established by the Secretary of the Interior by publication of a Federal Register notice within 30 days after the agreement is made between the two secretaries.

The bill would also provide authority for the Secretary of the Interior to enter into agreements with other Federal agencies to provide public access to, and management, interpretation, and historic preservation of, historically significant resources associated with the Manhattan Project; to provide technical assistance for Manhattan Project resources not included within the park; and to enter into cooperative agreements and accept donations related to park purposes. Additionally, it would allow the Secretary of the Interior to accept donations or enter into agreements to provide visitor services and administrative facilities within reasonable proximity to the park. The Secretary of Energy would be authorized to accept donations to help preserve and provide access to Manhattan Project resources.

H.R. 1208 is based on the recommendations developed through the special resource study for the Manhattan Project Sites that was authorized by Congress in 2004 and transmitted to Congress in

July 2011. The study, which was conducted by the National Park Service in consultation with the Department of Energy, determined that resources at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos, and Hanford, met the National Park Service's criteria of national significance, suitability, feasibility, and the need for Federal management for designation as a unit of the National Park System. H.R. 1208 assigns the respective roles and responsibilities of the National Park Service and the Department of Energy as envisioned in the study; the National Park Service would use its expertise in the areas of interpretation and education to increase public awareness and understanding of the story, while the Department of Energy would retain full responsibility for operations, maintenance, safe access, and preservation of historic Manhattan Project properties already under its jurisdiction along with full responsibility for any environmental remediation that is deemed necessary related to the properties to ensure public safety.

Because the Department of Energy would maintain and operate, as they do currently, the primary facilities associated with the Manhattan Project National Historical Park, the study estimated that the National Park Service's annual operation and maintenance costs for the three sites together would range from \$2.45 million to \$4 million. It also estimated that completing the General Management Plan for the park would cost an estimated \$750,000. Costs of acquiring lands or interests in land, or developing facilities, would be estimated during the development of the General Management Plan. The Department of Energy has not yet assessed fully the operational difficulties in terms of security and public health and safety, applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, and the potential new cost of national park designation at the sensitive national security and cleanup sites, which would be addressed with the context of the General Management Plan.

The Department anticipates that the initial agreement between the two Departments likely would be fairly limited in scope, given the bill's one-year timeframe for executing an agreement that would enable the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. We appreciate the language specifically providing for amendments to the agreement and a broad range of authorities for the Secretary of the Interior, as these provisions would give the National Park Service the flexibility to shape the park over time and to maximize the promotion of education and interpretation related to the park's purpose in coordination and consultation with the Department of Energy..

The flexibility is particularly important because managing a park with such complex resources, in partnership with another Federal agency, at three sites across the country, will likely bring unanticipated challenges. Some of the resources that may be included in the park may be near facilities that have highly sensitive, ongoing national security missions including nuclear weapons production and intelligence activities. Also, some of these sites may be on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List. If this legislation is enacted, these issues, among others, will be taken into consideration by the Departments in the development of an agreement and management plan. The National Park Service has already begun a partnership with the Department of Energy regarding the Manhattan Project resources through our coordinated work on the study. If this legislation is enacted, we look forward to building a stronger partnership that will enable us to meet the challenges ahead.

While we support H.R. 1208, there are some areas where we would like to recommend amendments. Among our concerns are the bill language regarding the written consent of owners; land acquisition limitations; and activities outside of the park. We are continuing to review the bill for any technical issues. We would be happy to work with the committee to develop the appropriate language and will provide our recommendations in the near future.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.