

**Statement of Heather McClenahan  
Executive Director, Los Alamos Historical Society  
For the House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands  
On H.R. 5987, The Manhattan Project National Historical Park  
June 28, 2012**

**Summary:**

Historians have called the Manhattan Project the most significant undertaking of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Employing hundreds of thousands at its peak, located in widely scattered, secret communities, the project brought an end to World War II and ushered in the atomic age. As an organization that has preserved Manhattan Project history for nearly fifty years, the Los Alamos Historical Society is pleased to support this legislation.

Key points in our testimony include:

- The significance of this history and why it should justify a national historical park
- The broad support and cooperation this park has generated
- The positive economic impact the park will have on northern New Mexico
- The importance of partnerships in making this park a reality

At its heart, the story of the Manhattan Project is an amazing episode of our great nation's history. It brought together the brightest scientists, many of them immigrants who came to this country seeking freedom. They faced pressure to end the world's most horrible war by creating something that had only existed in theory. It is a story about young people with a can-do spirit who brought about a great technological achievement. It is the story of unleashing a mysterious force of nature and of fostering fear and uncertainty about the future of humankind. It is a story about creativity and about destruction. It is a scientific story, a soldier's story, a spy story, and a human story. The story of the Manhattan Project is one that, from the perspectives of all who participated and all who were affected, must be told.

The Los Alamos Historical Society appreciates the Committee on Natural Resources' Chairman Doc Hastings leadership in considering H.R. 5987, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. We are also grateful for the leadership of Congressman Lujan and Congressman Fleischmann.

I am Heather McClenahan, executive director of the Los Alamos Historical Society a non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve, promote, and communicate the remarkable history and inspiring stories of Los Alamos and its people for our community, for the global audience, and for future generations. Among our many activities, we operate the Los Alamos Historical Museum and own, in a life trust, the World War II home of Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, scientific director of the Manhattan Project. As the owner of this home in the Los Alamos Historic District, we are property owners within the potential boundary of the park. Additionally, helping to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is one of seven planks in our strategic plan.

My testimony is in support of S. 3300, a bill to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park. As long-time keepers of the history of Los Alamos, we fully support this bill's efforts to "enhance the protection and preservation of such resources and provide for comprehensive interpretation and public understanding of this nationally significant story in 20th century American history."

I will make four key points. One, why this history should be commemorated in a national park; two, the broad community support this park enjoys; three, why this will have positive impact on northern New Mexico; and four, why partnerships will be critical to making this park become a reality.

In 2007, recognizing the impact of a possible national park on our community, the Los Alamos County Council appointed an ad hoc committee to determine what such a

park might look like in Los Alamos. I served on that committee, and the details of our recommendations are included in pages seven through nine of this document. In summary, we envisioned a downtown national park visitor center where guests would learn about the Manhattan Project and then be sent to existing venues to learn more, a recommendation the National Park Service adopted in its final report to Congress.

Tied together under the auspices of a national park, the Manhattan Project industrial sites in Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Hanford, along with the places where soldiers and scientists lived and formed communities, will create a full picture of the history.

Some critics have said that a national park dedicated to the Manhattan Project will glorify the atomic bomb or create a theme park for weapons of mass destruction. I disagree. I have never visited a national park that was anything like a Disneyland. In fact, the National Park Service, of all government agencies, is the most trusted for telling complete stories from all sides—the good and bad, the painful and the poignant. Parks and monuments that commemorate battles or massacres do not celebrate ugly moments in American history. They teach about them; they help us, as a nation, to reflect and learn.

So, in the rich tradition of our national park system, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will need to include stories about the devastation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, environmental damage, and the fear of atomic annihilation that are its legacies, along with the stories of great technical and scientific achievement and the decisive ending of World War II. The nation needs to understand the Manhattan Project from all sides.

The communities called out in this legislation—Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Hanford—fully support this park. In 2008, our ad hoc committee held public meetings in Los Alamos as well as meetings with potential partners, from tour guides to the nearby pueblos. After some initial—and false—concern that the park service might take over the Los Alamos Historical Society Testimony, H.R. 5987

iconic Fuller Lodge in downtown Los Alamos as a park headquarters was resolved, the community came out fully in support of the park. The County Council passed a resolution to that effect in February 2010 (see pages ten and eleven of this document), and, most recently, a group of community leaders sent a letter to Senators Bingaman and Udall as well as Congressman Lujan in support of this legislation (pages twelve and thirteen of this document). We have had several meetings with our counterparts in Hanford and Oak Ridge to discuss park possibilities. In short, we are excited about this park and are happy to assist the Department of Interior, the Department of Energy, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and others to make it happen. We believe it will be a benefit not only to Los Alamos but to nearby communities, as well.

That leads to my third point, that the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will provide economic benefits to northern New Mexico. With, by the Park Services own estimate, hundreds of thousands of additional annual visitors, the region will need workers not only in tourism and service industries but in construction and other related industries.

As our ad hoc committee suggested, the story of the Manhattan Project isn't just about world-class scientists. The story includes people from the rural communities and pueblos surrounding Los Alamos, mostly Native Americans and Hispanics, who provided the backbone of a labor force that built and maintained the laboratories and facilities, cleaned the houses, and drove the trucks. The Manhattan Project forever changed rustic northern New Mexico. In fact, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will, once again, transform these communities, creating an economic driver based on heritage tourism that provides jobs, educational opportunities, and improved futures to traditionally under-served communities.

Finally, we appreciate with enthusiasm the statement in Section 3 of this bill that one purpose of the park is “to assist the Department of Energy, Historical Park communities, historical societies, and other interested organizations and individuals in efforts to preserve and protect the historically significant resources associated with the Manhattan Project.” Protecting these resources is something the Los Alamos Historical Society has been working on for nearly fifty years. Partnerships and cooperative agreements between agencies, non-profit groups such as ours, and even private property owners will make this park happen, bringing together widespread resources for the benefit of our nation as the Manhattan Project did years ago.

Again, I urge you to view the recommendations from the ad hoc committee, specifically the section about partnerships. Manhattan Project resources, from museums to the laboratory and from tour guides to the famous “gatekeeper” office at 109 E. Palace Avenue in Santa Fe, are dispersed and disorganized when it comes to the theme of Manhattan Project history. The national park will bring these resources together, along with those of Hanford and Oak Ridge, for visitors to understand a bigger picture.

We are also especially pleased to see in the final section of the bill that both the Department of Interior and the Department of Energy will be able to accept monetary or service donations for the park. This is particularly important to restoration work at Los Alamos National Laboratory and will assist the lab in preserving a significant historic site. One individual has been waiting in the wings for years to donate to the site’s restoration but has had no mechanism for giving the money. The park will allow this preservation project to take place.

In sum, along with many community partners who have worked on this project, the Los Alamos Historical Society fully supports the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in order to preserve and teach this important history. The park

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has tremendous support in our community. We believe it will have economic benefit to northern New Mexico. We are heartened to see the Department of Energy willing to work with the Department of Interior and other partners to make this world-changing history accessible.

The Los Alamos Historical Museum is located in the building where Gen. Leslie Groves stayed when he came to Project Y, and it serves as the focal point of the community's Historic District. We look forward to sharing our stories with the many visitors a national historical park will bring in addition to sharing our resources with the National Park Service to assist in creation of the park. Working with local, state, and national partners to help create the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is a long-term goal in the Los Alamos Historical Society's strategic plan. We look forward to working with you to achieve that goal.

**Recommendations to the Los Alamos County Council from the  
Manhattan Project National Historical Park (MPNHP) Ad Hoc Committee  
04/02/2008**

## **I. Purpose**

In 2004, Congress approved and the President signed legislation directing the NPS to conduct a special resource study to determine the national significance, suitability, and feasibility of designating one or more historic sites of the Manhattan Project for potential inclusion in the National Park System. This park could include non-contiguous sites in Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, Hanford, and Dayton. The NPS held meetings in each of the communities during the spring and summer of 2006 to gather public input.

In August 2007, Los Alamos County Council approved the establishment of an ad hoc committee to help determine what the proposed non-contiguous Manhattan Project National Historical Park might look like in Los Alamos. This committee is comprised of representatives involved in historic preservation and tourism from throughout the community, including Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). After approval by Council, the committee will present its plan to NPS representatives when they come to Los Alamos for a second round of community meetings in 2008.

## **II. Committee Conduct**

The committee began meeting bi-weekly in August 2007 and discussed several ideas, such as what “attractions” might be included in a national park and who locally might participate. These ideas were expanded upon and refined over time. A great deal of Manhattan Project history has already been preserved in our community in places such as the Los Alamos Historical Museum, the Bradbury Science Museum, and the Oppenheimer House. The committee members do not believe that the NPS needs to “reinvent the wheel.”

In October, the committee took a special “behind the fence” tour of sites at LANL which may be included in the park, either as part of periodic tours or which may be open to more public access in the future.

On Nov. 6 and 9, the committee held meetings by invitation and word of mouth for potential partners in the park. Approximately fifteen people attended the first meeting and ten attended the second. At both meetings, ad hoc committee members shared their vision for the park site (see III. below) Most of these potential partners were intrigued with the idea of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park within the community and looked forward to getting more information from the NPS.

On November 13, the committee held an advertised public meeting in Fuller Lodge to discuss this vision for the park. Another fifteen people attended and added to the committee’s ideas.

Based on input from these meetings, the committee has refined its vision and proposes the following:

## **III. Park Vision**

**A. Centralized Park Headquarters:** At a central Visitor Center, which would include information and interpretation, a Park Ranger would greet visitors, tell them about the National Park and then direct them to other sites in the area where they would be able to see tangible historical sites and objects from the Manhattan Project (Ashley

Pond, Lamy Train Station) as well as interpretation and information that is already taking place in the community (LA Historical Museum, Bradbury Science Museum).

### **B. Tours**

a. Guided and Self-Guided: These would include ranger-guided walking tours through the downtown historic district and other sites; driving and walking audio tours; as well as guided tours that would show visitors accessible areas of LANL, historic downtown, the old Main Gate location, and other sites.

b. LANL: With approval and coordination of LANL and the Department of Energy officials, periodic “Behind the Fence Tours” to V-Site, Gun Site, and other restored Manhattan Project-era buildings, similar to the tours held at Trinity Site.

### **C. Partners**

Potential partners in this project are those who own, maintain or have some other association (such as tourist services or items) with tangible historical objects or buildings from the Manhattan Project – something that will enhance visitors’ experiences and increase their understanding of this time in history. The lists below are not all-inclusive.

### **D. Potential Themes of Interpretation**

1. People/Social History
  - a. Scientists and their families
  - b. Military
    - i. In Los Alamos (SEDs, MPs, etc.)
    - ii. In the Pacific, including POWs
  - c. Local Pueblo and Hispanic populations whose lives were affected and who were an essential part of the project (stet)
  - d. Local historical figures such as Edith Warner, Dorothy McKibbin, Evelyn Frey
  - e. Stories of people affected by the bombings, both American and Japanese
  - f. Responses to the bomb
2. Science
  - a. Bradbury Science Museum
3. Impacts
  - a. Science
  - b. Northern New Mexico
  - c. Military
  - d. International Relations
  - e. Cold War
  - f. Environmental/Health
  - g. Government
    - i. Civilian control of nuclear resources (AEC, DOE)
    - ii. The growth of government-run, multi-disciplinary science labs
4. Growth of the town of Los Alamos
5. What happened to people after the war?

### **E. Potential Visitor Sites**

1. Local
  - a. The Los Alamos Historical Museum

- b. The Bradbury Science Museum
  - c. Oppenheimer House
  - d. Ashley Pond
  - e. Ice House Memorial
  - f. Fuller Lodge
  - g. Historic Walking Tour of Bathtub Row
  - h. Periodic “Behind the Fence” Tours to V-Site, Gun Site, and other restored Manhattan-era buildings at LANL
  - i. Unitarian Church (former dorm)
  - j. Little Theater (former Rec Hall)
  - k. Christian Science Church (former dorm)
  - l. Hill Diner (WWII-era building)
  - m. Main Hill Road/Main Gate area
  - n. Last Sundt apartment building in Los Alamos (Dentist office on Trinity)
  - o. Crossroads Bible Church (WW II-era Theater)
2. Nearby
- a. Bandelier National Monument
  - b. Pajarito Mountain Ski Area
  - c. Valles Caldera
  - d. Otowi Bridge
  - e. Sundt apartments in Espanola on Railroad Avenue
3. Santa Fe
- a. 109 E. Palace Ave.
  - b. La Fonda
  - c. Lamy Train Station
  - d. Delgado Street Bridge and other spy-related sites
4. Albuquerque
- a. Oxnard Air Field (Kirtland AFB)
  - b. National Atomic Museum
5. Future considerations
- a. Sculptures, outdoor art, and other monuments to the Manhattan Project era that are currently under consideration

INCORPORATED COUNTY OF LOS ALAMOS RESOLUTION NO. 10-06

**A RESOLUTION STATING THE LOS ALAMOS COUNTY COUNCIL'S POSITION ON THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STUDY FOR THE MANHATTAN PROJECT NATIONAL HISTORIC STUDY AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING MANHATTAN PROJECT SITES.**

**WHEREAS**, Public Law 108-340 "The Manhattan Project National Historical Park Study Act" directs the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the U.S. Department of Energy, to conduct a Special Resource Study (SRS) on the preservation and interpretation of historic sites of the Manhattan Project for potential inclusion in the National Park System; and

**WHEREAS**, the three major sites are the Los Alamos National Laboratory and town site in Los Alamos, New Mexico, the Hanford Site in Hanford, Washington and the Oak Ridge reservation in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; and

**WHEREAS**, the National Park Service released the Draft Special Resource Study/Environmental Assessment of the Manhattan Project Sites in November 2009, which recommends an option named "Alternative E," that provides for the *Manhattan Project National Historical Park* congressional designation be given to a site in Los Alamos, which would be a unit of the National Park Service; and

**WHEREAS**, the "Alternative E" option further recommends that other Manhattan Project sites, including those at Hanford, Oak Ridge, and Dayton, Ohio, could be associated with the park, although they would not formally be part of the national historical park; and

**WHEREAS**, this alternative has been reviewed by the Energy Communities Alliance (ECA) which is a membership organization of the local communities adjacent to and impacted by Department of Energy facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, ECA members have worked in partnership for many years to preserve historic properties, and on heritage tourism initiatives for all of its communities; and

**WHEREAS**, it is vital that the creation of a National Historical Park for this purpose be comprehensive in nature; and

**WHEREAS**, community organizations (LANL, Los Alamos Historical Society, the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce (through their Main Street and Arts and Cultural District Programs), Bandelier National Monument, Valles Caldera National Preserve, the Oppenheimer Memorial Committee and the County's Board and Commissions (Art in Public Places Board, Lodger's Tax Advisory Board, and the Fuller Lodge Historic Districts Advisory Board) have collaborated for years regarding heritage tourism efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, Los Alamos County has many other attractions which would draw tourists to the park site, including the Los Alamos Historical and Bradbury Science Museums, historic structures such as Fuller Lodge, the Oppenheimer House, Ice House Memorial and Ashley Pond, the historic walking tour of Bathtub Row, and Special "behind the fence" tours to V and Gun Sites; and

**WHEREAS**, the County Council has previously adopted a Vision Statement, Goals and Strategic Measures which support the recommendations made by the National Park Service in Alternative E.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the Incorporated County of Los Alamos that:

1. "Alternative E," as recommended by the Draft Special Resource Study/Environmental Assessment of the Manhattan Project Sites, be approved, adding Hanford and Oak Ridge as units of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park, if resources are available.
2. The Department of Energy should continue to be responsible for maintenance, safety, and security of DOE facilities at any historical park sites.
3. The Park Service should be authorized to acquire appropriate properties within or associated with the Park only from willing sellers, lessors, or donors.
4. The Park Service and Los Alamos County should prepare a use agreement for all County properties associated with the Park recognizing the interests of the community and the uses of the properties that have been in place for half a century.
5. A National Park Service superintendent and other Park Service personnel will provide educational materials and overall interpretation, in collaboration with Department of Energy, and local communities.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of February, 2010.

**COUNCIL OF THE INCORPORATED  
COUNTY OF LOS ALAMOS**



**Michael E. Wismer  
Council Chair**

**ATTEST:**



**Janet Foster  
Los Alamos County Clerk**





## LOS ALAMOS COUNTY

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Michael E. Wismer  
**COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**  
Harry Burgess

May 22, 2012

Senator Tom Udall  
110 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Udall,

The Los Alamos County Council, on behalf of the citizens of our community, and in conjunction with the Los Alamos Historical Society, the Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce, the Bradbury Science Museum, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and other community partners, is writing this letter to commend your efforts and to provide you with our support for the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in the States of New Mexico, Tennessee, and Washington.

As you know, the Manhattan Project changed the world. It began in great secrecy in 1942, and the original mission was essentially successfully completed by August 1945, when the Japanese surrendered. The engineering and construction feats of the more than 100,000 men and women who were brought to all three sites from all over the world, is an incredible story that needs to be told.

On August 13, 1942 the Manhattan Engineer District was established under the command of General Leslie R. Groves. By September 1942, Groves had selected Oak Ridge as the site for uranium isotope separation. In November 1942, Los Alamos was chosen as the laboratory to build the integral parts of the bomb under the direction of Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer. In January 1943, Hanford was selected for plutonium production. On August 14, 1945 the war with Japan was over – 3 years and 1 day from the start of the Manhattan Project. An incredible achievement!

In today's world, it is mind-boggling to think of what happened in these short three years. First the land had to be acquired and existing homes and land-owners had to be moved off of these sites. Then workers had to be located – engineers, physicists, chemists, mathematicians as well as carpenters, electricians, iron workers, cement masons, and a multitude of office workers, cooks, guards, and truck drivers. They had to build their towns and then work in the laboratories and other buildings they made to tackle one of the greatest challenges ever seen by science.

Lansing Lamont's book, *Day of Trinity*, describes what the world-traveled physicists met when they came to their task in Los Alamos in early 1943:

"Only the vista from the summit rewarded the scientists who had reached their destination: rising westward, the Jemez Mountains, richly forested with ponderosa pines that swept from sunny upland glades down to lush green basins with melodic names like Valle Grande and Valle Jaramillo; stretching southward from the Los Alamos Mesa to the Rio Grande far below, the huge fan of the Pajarito Plateau, its rim scalloped by splendid canyons sliced in the soft yellow tuff by centuries of rain and melting snow; and beyond, to the east, the glistening peaks of the Sangre de Cristo range."

A sense of place remains strong today for Los Alamos visitors, who can stroll the paths where the giants of 20<sup>th</sup>

century physics walked. It is still possible to see the vistas that inspired the scientists, the buildings of the Los Alamos Ranch School where they lived, including Oppenheimer's House, and, with agreements from the Department of Energy, some of the widely-scattered technical sites at the laboratory.

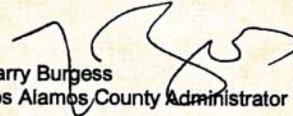
The story of the Manhattan Project must be told to future generations.

Therefore, we the undersigned give our full support to Congressional efforts to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and Hanford. This National Park should be established now, by this Congress.

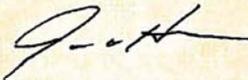
Respectfully submitted,



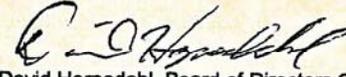
Sharon Stover, Chair  
Los Alamos County Council



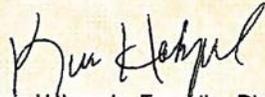
Harry Burgess  
Los Alamos County Administrator



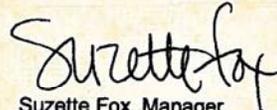
Jim Hall  
State of New Mexico – District 43



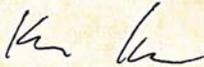
David Horpedahl, Board of Directors Chair  
Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce



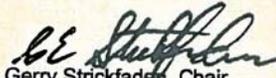
Kevin Holsapple, Executive Director  
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Katy Korkos, Manager  
Los Alamos Member & Visitor Bureau



Gerry Strickfaden, Chair  
Fuller Lodge/Historic Districts Advisory Board



Heather McClenahan, Executive Director  
Los Alamos Historical Society

cc: Seth Kirshenber, Kutak Rock, LLP  
Cynthia C. Kelly, National Trust for Historic Preservation