

STATEMENT OF FRAN MAINELLA, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING THE OVERSIGHT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM ADVISORY BOARD REAUTHORIZATION.

JUNE 22, 2006

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, it is my pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the National Park System Advisory Board's (Advisory Board) reauthorization. First, on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS), I would like to acknowledge and thank Congress for its continuing support of our parks and the Advisory Board.

The Advisory Board was first authorized in 1935 under the Historic Sites, Buildings and Antiquities Act. The Advisory Board advises the Director of the NPS and the Secretary of the Interior on matters relating to the NPS, including the administration of the Historic Sites, Buildings, and the Antiquities Act; the designation of national historic landmarks and national natural landmarks; and the national historic significance of proposed national historic trails. The Advisory Board may advise on matters submitted to the Board by the Director, as well as any other issues identified by the Board.

At present, the Advisory Board's membership consists of no more than 12 individuals selected from citizens of the United States having demonstrated commitment to the mission of the NPS, and representing various geographic regions, including each of the seven administrative regions of the NPS. Members of the Advisory Board bring diverse broad ranging academic, professional, and personal experience to draw upon. This collective expertise assists the Director in formulating system-wide solutions to highly complex issues. To this end, the Advisory Board has provided exemplary service to the Director and has worked cooperatively with the Director to ensure the preservation of this Nation's important natural and historic places for future generations of Americans.

The Advisory Board is an active body currently engaged on a broad front of issues, meeting quarterly and advising the Director regularly. The Advisory Board accomplishes a considerable amount of its work through committees. Since 2001, as many as 12 committees have been active. Currently nine committees assist with the work of the full Advisory Board: Landmarks, Philanthropy, Education, Science, Partnerships, Management Policies, Director's Council, Health and Recreation, and Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits. The committees are chaired by Advisory Board members and appropriate subject matter experts selected at the discretion of the Director. The Director's Council, composed of former directors and former senior NPS managers, was created to advise the Director on highly complex issues facing the NPS and has proved to be highly effective.

Future and ongoing efforts as well as recent accomplishments include:

- Later this year, the Advisory Board will complete an evaluation and provide its recommendations of the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program, which is administered by the NPS in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Officers and the Internal Revenue Service.
- This fall, through the efforts of the Education committee, the Advisory Board will bring together experts to assess the effectiveness of NPS' education and interpretive programs and will provide recommendations to NPS leaders and educators.
- The Advisory Board regularly makes recommendations on National Historic Landmarks to the Secretary after receiving input from its National Historic Landmarks committee.
- The Advisory Board also is providing input on the development of a television series to spotlight national parks as places that inspire learning about America.
- In early June 2006, the Advisory Board met to review, advise, and recommend action on the NPS's final revision of *NPS Management Policies*. Participants in this assessment included several former NPS Directors and past NPS senior executives.
- In May 2006, the Advisory Board initiated an analysis of prospects for enhancing the role of private philanthropy in support of the National Park System, involving directly in this task leaders of the National Park Foundation, the congressionally chartered body whose principal mission is to raise funds for the NPS. On September 15 and 16, 2006, the Advisory Board will meet jointly with the Foundation Board to explore opportunities for the two bodies to work collaboratively.
- The final revision of DO-21: Donations and Fundraising, was enhanced through a review conducted by members of the Philanthropy committee.
- The Advisory Board just completed a report to the Director recommending that the NPS undertake a series of pilot projects to test, measure, and validate the premise that the national parks contribute to a healthy lifestyle through active participation in park-based recreational activities. This report supports the President's *HealthierUS* initiative and Executive Order 13266, which calls on federal agencies to increase the accessibility of resources for physical activity.
- In support of President Bush's call to help, "restore civic and historical understanding throughout American Society," the Advisory Board recently convened a panel of prominent American historians and scholars. The panel provided recommendations to the NPS about its education/interpretive mission and ways in which the program offered visitors at parks and historic sites can advance the President's goal.

- The Science committee has made recommendations to the Advisory Board which has advised the Director on implementation of research findings into improved park management based on scientific knowledge.
- In 2005, the Senate passed S. 243, the Heritage Partnership Act, which incorporated recommendations from an Advisory Board report. More recently, the Advisory Board provided input into the development of an Administration legislative proposal on National Heritage Areas.
- During 2003, the Advisory Board was instrumental in working with the Stiltsville Trust and advising on a management plan for the Stiltsville area of Biscayne National Park, which resulted in the opening the area to the public.

Last December, the Administration transmitted an Administration legislative proposal to Congress that would amend the Advisory Board's statutory authority in four areas. The first area would modify the membership of the Advisory Board. This would be done by requiring at least four members to have outstanding expertise in one or more of the fields of history, archeology, anthropology, historical or landscape architecture, biology, ecology, geology, marine science or social science; three members to have outstanding expertise and prior experience in management of National or State parks or protected areas or natural or cultural resources management; three members to have outstanding expertise in any other professional or scientific discipline important to the mission of the National Park Service; at least one member to have expertise in historic recreational opportunities within units of the National Park System; and at least one member to be an elected official from an area adjacent to or within close proximity to a unit of the National Park System.

The second area would require that the Advisory Board members adhere to ethics and conflict of interest provisions by removing the current law's exemption. The third area would extend the authority of the Advisory Board to 2016. A fourth area of revision would provide for technical amendments. Together, these amendments will increase the Advisory Board's overall effectiveness and influence and improve clarity and ease of reference. A bill was introduced in the Senate, S. 2627, reflecting the Administration's proposal. The Senate Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on the bill on May 16, 2006.

The Advisory Board is an invaluable partner of the Department, providing important advice to the Department as we carry out the national vision that created the National Park System 90 years ago. The Department looks forward to continuing an effective and collegial relationship with the Advisory Board as we strive to position the NPS for its next 100 years.

Mr. Chairman, I have given you an overview of some of the important issues facing the National Park System Advisory Board. I look forward to continuing our work together to perpetuate the important role the Advisory Board fulfills in advising the NPS. This concludes my testimony, and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other subcommittee members might have.