

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Markup Memorandum

May 3, 2018

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff—Terry Camp and Holly Baker
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Hearing: **H.R. 5655 (Rep. Andy Barr)**, To establish the Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument in the State of Kentucky as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.
May 8, 2018, 10:15 AM; 1324 Longworth House Office Building

H.R. 5655, “*Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument Act*”

Summary of the Bill

H.R.5655, introduced by Representative Andy Barr (R-KY-06), establishes the Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument in Nicholasville, Kentucky, as a unit of the National Park System.

Background

Located in southern Jessamine County, Kentucky, and founded in 1863, Camp Nelson was constructed by Major General Ambrose Burnside and the 9th Corps of the Army of Ohio to serve as a supply depot, hospital facility, and training and recruiting center for the Union Army during the Civil War.¹

Camp Nelson provided the Union Army with over 10,000 African American soldiers, making it the third largest recruiting and training depot for African American soldiers in the country. African American troops were trained and served at Camp Nelson. As freed slaves, many had no option but to bring their families along with them to the camp as they trained to fight.²

In November 1864, Brigadier General Speed S. Fry ordered the families staying with the soldiers out of the camp. Tragically, the expulsion from the camp resulted in more than a hundred refugees dying from exposure due to the freezing temperatures.³

¹ “Camp Nelson.” National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, www.nps.gov/nr/travel/underground/Camp_Nelson.html.

² Ibid 1.

³ Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park, Camp Nelson Restoration & Preservation Foundation, www.campnelson.org/history/african.htm.

General Fry's actions infuriated the African American recruits and undermined African American recruitment efforts. Because of the complaints and reactions, officials in Washington, D.C. ordered General Fry to establish a camp for the refugees within Camp Nelson. A superintendent for the refugees was appointed and Reverend John G. Fee encouraged the building of duplex cottages. In a collaborative effort, the American Missionary Association assisted the Army in caring for the refugee families.⁴ Camp Nelson and the refugee site served as a shelter for over 3,000 of the soldiers' wives and children.

The original Camp Nelson covered 4,000 acres and has roughly 300 buildings including a school, hospital and mess hall, among other accommodations.⁵

In 1998, Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park was established by the Jessamine County Fiscal Court using local, State, and federal funds to preserve large tracts of land, construct a visitor center, construct replica barracks, recreate a fort, develop informational trails, and educate the public.

Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park was designated as part of the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom in 2008 and was later designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2013.

The Subcommittee on Federal Lands held a legislative hearing on a related bill, H.R. 1992, Camp Nelson Heritage Park Study Act, on February 28, 2018.

Major Provisions

- Establishes the Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument in Nicholasville, Kentucky, as a unit of the National Park System.
- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land or interest in land located in the monument boundary by donation, purchase with donated fund, or exchange.
- Provides that the Monument will not be established until an agreement has been entered into between owners of private or non-Federal lands within the Monument's boundaries and that sufficient land has been acquired to constitute a manageable unit.
- Protects the rights of private property owners and prohibits buffers zones outside of the Monument.

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

Administration Position

⁴ Ibid at 3.

⁵ Camp Nelson: Overview, Camp Nelson Restoration and Preservation Foundation, www.campnelson.org/introduction.htm.

The Administration's position is currently unknown.

Anticipated Amendments

None.

Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)

None.