

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 5665, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CONVEY CERTAIN LANDS AND IMPROVEMENTS OF THE GOODING DIVISION OF THE MINIDOKA PROJECT, IDAHO.

September 28, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of Interior's views on H.R. 5665, legislation to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain facilities, buildings and lands of the Gooding Division of the Minidoka Project in Idaho to the American Falls Reservoir District #2. The Department supports this legislation.

H.R. 5665 would authorize the title transfer of federally owned facilities, buildings, and lands from the Bureau of Reclamation to the American Falls Reservoir District #2. Reclamation law and policy contemplate the transfer of projects to local entities where and when appropriate. In 1995, the Bureau of Reclamation began an effort to facilitate the transfer of title to Reclamation projects and facilities in a consistent and comprehensive way. Reclamation developed a process known as the *Framework for the Transfer of Title* - establishing a process whereby interested non-Federal entities would work with and through Reclamation to identify and address all of the issues that would enable the title transfer to move forward. Once completed, Reclamation and the entity interested in taking title would work with the Congress to gain the necessary authorization for such a title transfer. In the case of the transfer authorized by this bill, Reclamation and the American Falls Reservoir District #2 have worked collaboratively and efficiently to successfully address all the elements of Reclamation's title transfer policy framework.

The primary feature of the title transfer authorized by H.R. 5665 is the Milner-Gooding Canal. More detail on this aspect of this proposed transfer was provided in the Department's testimony on S. 2129, the Senate companion bill to H.R. 5665, before the Senate Subcommittee on Water and Power on June 28, 2006. As stated in that testimony, one of the Administration's goals in title transfer is to protect the financial interest of the United States, that is, to make sure that the United States is in the same or better financial position following title transfer. In this case, the full costs of all facilities, buildings, and acquired lands to be transferred, including the Milner-Gooding Canal, have already been repaid pursuant to the District's amendatory repayment contract. The District has also identified some withdrawn lands for which they would like to gain title and have agreed to pay the fair market appraised value for these lands. There are no ongoing revenue streams associated with the facilities, buildings, and lands. Because the District has fulfilled its repayment obligation under its contract, payment is required only for the additional withdrawn lands that the District has proposed for title transfer.

While the focus of this legislation is the transfer of the Reclamation facilities to the American Falls Reservoir District #2, the legislation also directs Reclamation to transfer title for specific smaller parcels to the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the State of Idaho, and the City of Gooding, since those entities currently manage the relevant lands. Reclamation has worked closely with the National Park Service and the other relevant entities to craft the language that appears in the transfer agreement. Two of these smaller parcels would be added to the boundary of Minidoka Internment National Monument .

Minidoka Internment National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation in 2001 to provide opportunities for public education and interpretation of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. It is one of two internment sites that are units of the National Park System. At Minidoka, the National Park Service documents and describes the experiences of the almost 120,000 Japanese Americans who, in 1942, were forced from their homes in California, western Oregon, Washington, and southern Arizona in the single largest forced relocation in U.S. history. Many spent the next three years in one of ten "relocation centers" across the country run by the newly-formed War Relocation Authority (WRA).

The lands proposed for transferred to the National Park Service under this legislation were part of the Minidoka Relocation Center, which was in operation from August 10, 1942 to October 28, 1945. Five miles of barbed wire fencing and eight watch towers surrounded the administrative and residential portions of the relocation center. The maximum population was 7,318. Evacuees were from Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.

The transfer of the two parcels, totaling 10.18 acres, to Minidoka Internment National Monument is supported in the monument's recently approved General Management Plan. The smaller parcel is located in the historic warehouse area and contains three buildings from the historic period as well as numerous warehouse foundations. This area would be used as the primary site for visitor orientation and information. An existing historic warehouse would be adapted to serve as a visitor contact station and central trailhead for visitor self-guided walking tours. The larger parcel on the east end of the national monument was part of the original WRA camp and was never developed. It would be used as overflow parking and for special events.

Since establishment of the national monument, the National Park Service, Reclamation, and American Falls Reservoir District #2 have entered into an agreement to move the District's operations to a site outside the national monument's boundary, and that relocation is about 85% complete. The National Park Service has obligated \$250,000 to the Bureau of Reclamation for relocation costs.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the committee may have.