

Statement of Representative Brian Baird (WA-3rd),
Before the
House Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands
on H.R. 2099
July 9, 2002

Mr. Chairman, Madame Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today in support of my legislation, H.R. 2099. This bill would increase the authorization for federal spending on preserving and rehabilitating the Fort Vancouver National Historic Reserve.

Fort Vancouver, located on the banks of the Columbia River, is perhaps the most significant historic site in the Pacific Northwest. It is rich in historic and cultural national significance, pre-dating the arrival of Lewis and Clark through the mid-20th century. Before the arrival of the American traders and well before the Lewis and Clark expedition arrived, this site on the shore of the Columbia River was a home to a variety of Indian tribes for over 10,000 years, including the Cascades, Chehalis, Chinook, Clallam, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Nisqually, Tillamook, and Shasta tribes. Fort Vancouver was also headquarters for the Hudson's Bay Company's Columbia Department, embracing present-day British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and Idaho. The trading post, which was the center of the region's fur trading enterprise, represented Britain's business and governmental interests in competition with the United States. The 1846 treaty between Great Britain and the United States established today's northern-most boundary at the 49th parallel.

The Vancouver Barracks was established in 1849 when the first contingent of U.S. Army troops arrived in the newly American lands. From 1849 until World War I, during which time some of the Army's most promising officers (including Ulysses S. Grant, Phillip Sheridan, George McClellan and George C. Marshall) were stationed at Vancouver, the barracks was the principal military headquarters for the Pacific Northwest. Owing to its national significance, the site was designated by Congress as a National Historic Monument in 1948, and later as a National Historic Site. The 55-acre Vancouver Barracks contains 32 structures, many of which have been determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, including several rare examples of military architecture.

The Vancouver Barracks is an important part of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, which was designated by Congress in 1996 for the coordinated preservation, public use and management of historic sites within the Vancouver area. The Reserve was established as a partnership among the landowners in the Reserve, which include the National Park Service, the city of Vancouver, the U.S. Army and the Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. The 366 acre Historic Reserve contains Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, the Vancouver Barracks, Officers Row, Pearson Field, the Water Resources Center and portions of the Columbia River waterfront.

Today, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the importance of H.R. 2099, which seeks to

preserve Fort Vancouver for future generations. The 1996 Act that created the Historic Reserve provided an initial \$5 million authorization for capital projects, which has been fully authorized. It is important to note that a provision was included in the Fiscal Year 2002 Interior Appropriations bill which essentially says

there would be no further federal appropriations for capital projects within the Vancouver National Historic Reserve unless and until a new "authorization" for capital projects is approved by Congress. Of great importance to my congressional district, to the Pacific Northwest and our nation, the legislation would increase from \$5 million to \$25 million the authorization of appropriations for the Vancouver National Historic Reserve development costs.

For over half a century local, state and federal government agencies, along with numerous private individuals and organizations, have been collaborating to preserve and interpret the history of the Vancouver area and the region. During the past 15 years in excess of \$30 million has been invested in property improvements and projects within the present Historic Reserve boundaries. The federal government has provided approximately 25% of the capital funds for these efforts. The remaining 75% has been provided by local and state governments, foundations such as the locally based Vancouver National Historic Trust, and numerous other individuals, businesses and not-for-profit organizations. In fact, you will be hearing from two of these partners, Vancouver Mayor Royce Pollard and Bruce Hagensen, Board Member of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve Trust, later during this hearing.

Based on the Vancouver Barracks Adaptive Reuse and Economic Analysis completed in early 2000, it has been determined that the rehabilitation of buildings and the adaptations necessary for new uses in the west barracks will cost approximately \$40 million. The city of Vancouver has committed \$6 million for infrastructure improvements, the state of Washington has committed \$6 million for educational uses, and private donations will make up an additional \$8 million for building preservation efforts. A total federal contribution of \$20 million is being sought to match non-federal funding for the west Barracks project. This federal funding has been deemed key to successful private fund-raising efforts, securing tenants for the property, minimizing the impact of inflation and avoiding additional serious property deterioration.

I appreciate your careful consideration of this request for an increase in the authorization for the Fort Vancouver National Historic Reserve. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and the other members of the Subcommittee to move this legislation forward and continue progress on this significant project for the Pacific Northwest and our nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to answering any questions that members of the Subcommittee may have.

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