

July 19, 2007
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
1334 Longworth
10:00am

Congressman John Boozman's Testimony

Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Bishop, I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk about my legislation, H.R. 1266, the Butterfield Overland Trail Study Act. This historic trail passes through 8 states and was completed in 1858. The trail was the first overland mail route connecting those east of the Mississippi River to the rapidly expanding West. The two starting points of St. Louis and Memphis converge in Fort Smith, Arkansas, which lies at the southwestern edge of my congressional district. From 1858 through 1861, the Butterfield Trail served as the connector between the East and West, providing reliable mail service, transportation of goods and a route for settlers

to the western frontier. Remarkably, travelers and mail carriers could traverse the route in 25 days, covering over 2,800 miles. The Butterfield Trail was established by an Act of Congress in 1857 and provided an essential route before the famed Pony Express and the revolutionary Transcontinental Railroad.

The “Butterfield Overland Trail Study Act” directs the Secretary of Interior to conduct a resource study of the trail as it runs through the states of Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. A resource study would determine a number of things, including clarifying the history and location of the trail. A study would also propose ways to educate youth about the historic value of the trail, as well as recommend it

as a potential addition to the National Trails System. It must be pointed out that my bill does contain strict private property protections. In no way is this bill intended to supersede private property rights or coerce land owners into giving way to any government acquisition, markings or disruption of any kind. I am open to working with the Committee to ensure that Members are satisfied that private property rights are protected.

Since 1997, 5 new trails have been added to the National Trails System, which now totals 25 trails. My legislation would simply be the first step in determining if the Butterfield Trail qualifies for this distinction. Like the Trail of Tears and the Lewis and Clark Trail, the Butterfield Trail marks a momentous time in our nation's

history, when the East was connected with the West and people and goods moved rapidly to the new frontier. The Butterfield Trail was truly a catalyst in setting the path for America's westward expansion.

Mr. Chairman, as our country continues to rapidly grow and develop in the spirit of the Old American West, it is so important that we remember what brought us to this point. It is our duty to our children and grandchildren that we take the time to mark the paths our ancestors took across our country.