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Flores Statement at Natural Resources Subcommittee Hearing on Waco Mammoth Site

As Prepared for Delivery –

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Congressman Bill Flores (R-TX) delivered the following remarks at today's Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks Forests and Public Lands hearing on H.R. 1545, the Waco Mammoth National Monument Establishment Act of 2011:

“Thank you Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the subcommittee for holding today's hearing. My legislation, H.R. 1545, would recognize and establish the Waco Mammoth site as the Waco Mammoth National Monument and include it as a unit of the National Park Service.

“On a spring day in 1978, Waco residents Paul Barron and Eddie Bufkin were out looking for arrowheads and fossils along the Bosque River and just happened to come across a large bone protruding from the earth. Realizing the possible significance of this discovery, Mr. Barron and Mr. Bufkin immediately took the bone to the Strecker Museum at Baylor University for analysis. Little did they know at the time that they had just stumbled upon what is today believed to be the world's largest concentration of Columbian Mammoths to die in a single event.

“Over a period of nearly 30 years, crews of paleontological and archaeological experts, scientists and volunteers slowly excavated this lost world, eventually unearthing more than two dozen mammoths as well as the remains of a camel, a still unidentified animal and a tooth from a saber-tooth cat. It is amazing that the initial discovery of one bone led to such a massive, world-renowned collection allowing us a further glimpse into our world's prehistoric times.

“The National Park Service conducted a Special Resource Study of the Waco Mammoth site, first authorized in 2002 and completed in 2008. This study concluded that the site possesses nationally significant resources, is a suitable addition to the system and would be a feasible addition to the system. On the fourth criteria of a need for direct NPS management, the study cites an appropriateness “to investigate the potential for inclusion of the site in the national park system and for the National Park Service to take on key roles in a partnership arrangement.

“Currently, the National Park Service has a \$10 billion backlog. Given our current fiscal situation, H.R. 1545 has been drafted to provide the national recognition the site deserves,

without adding additional burdens to the federal budget or the backlog at NPS. In 2006, a non-profit organization of local citizens established the Waco Mammoth Foundation to make the site a public park. A seamless partnership exists between the City of Waco, Baylor University, and local community leaders and volunteers who have all worked so hard for decades to safeguard the site. The Foundation has demonstrated their commitment to showcasing this discovery and has already raised more than \$4 million for the site. The Waco Mammoth Foundation completed its first phase of improvements with a visitor center that officially opened to the public at the end of 2009. The Waco Mammoth site should be recognized for its incredible collection of prehistoric artifacts. H.R. 1545 would allow the National Park Service to capitalize on the efforts of this unique partnership consisting of private and community investment. I have personally toured the mammoth site, and I am proud to say to my colleagues that it is truly a site of national recognition.

“Thank you again Mr. Chairman for holding today’s hearing. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Waco City Manager Larry Groth for his dedication to seeking this recognition and for testifying today. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the committee to ensure this national recognition becomes a reality, and this new partnership approach with the National Park Service will allow the citizens of Waco to share this true national treasure in Central Texas with the world.”

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