

The Honorable Doc Hastings

Statement on H.R. 383

Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail Designation Act

House Resources Subcommittee on National Parks

July 13, 2006

Chairman Pearce:

Thank you for holding this important hearing this afternoon on my proposal to designate the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail through Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. This proposal has been cosponsored by every Member of Congress – both Republican and Democrat – who represents areas along the proposed trail. A companion measure was introduced by Senator Cantwell and passed the Senate last year.

At the end of the Ice Age, 12,000-17,000 years ago, a series of catastrophic floods occurred across the Pacific Northwest, leaving behind dramatic and distinguishing features on the landscape – including dramatic coulees and dry falls, and massive boulders deposited hundreds of miles away from their origin. These sites have long been the subject of interest amongst scientists and residents alike, but there has never been a cohesive effort to help the public understand the interconnection of these features across the states.

In 2001, a joint study team headed by the National Park Service recognized the national significance of these geologic features and endorsed the establishment of the Ice Age Floods National Geologic Trail to coordinate public and private sector entities in the presentation of the story of the Ice Age Floods. The legislation you are reviewing today is based on the preferred alternative under that study.

My proposal would designate a driving route along public highways through four Northwest states. This bill provides for a cooperative management effort between federal, state, local and non-profit entities in the development of an interpretive program that will finally tell the story of the Ice Age Floods in a way that connects these distant geologic features. In addition, the trail designation will bring greater attention to these sites – increasing tourism and creating new economic opportunities in communities throughout a vast and largely rural stretch of the Pacific Northwest.

I am aware that the National Park Service – at a Senate hearing last year – expressed some concerns about the potential fiscal impact of this proposal, even though the preferred alternative from the agency's own study formed the basis of this legislation. Nonetheless, I too am sensitive to the funding needs of the National Park Service. I am privileged to have incredible National Park Service units like the North Cascades National Park in my district. I certainly do not intend to take funding away from pressing needs at existing sites. For this reason, this legislation emphasizes the role of the non-federal partners in the development of the trail and caps any associated land acquisition at no more than 25 acres. I also note that any funding of this proposal would, of course, be subject to future appropriations.

Mr. Chairman, I stand ready to work with you and your staff, as well as the National Park Service to address any outstanding concerns. I thank you again for holding today's hearing and urge your favorable consideration of this bill.