

STATEMENT OF JANET SNYDER MATTHEWS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE HOUSE RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING H.R. 413, TO ESTABLISH THE BLEEDING KANSAS AND THE ENDURING STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

November 10, 2005

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 413, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom National Heritage Area.

While a feasibility study has found the Bleeding Kansas area appropriate for designation, we recommend that the Committee defer action on H.R. 413 until program legislation is enacted that establishes guidelines and a process for designation of national heritage areas. Last year, the Administration sent to Congress a legislative proposal to establish such guidelines and a process for designation. This year, the Administration is working on a similar legislative proposal, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on this very important issue. Another reason we are recommending deferral is that given current fiscal constraints, any discussion of particular national heritage areas should be consistent with the President's budget. Funding in the FY 2006 President's Budget for the National Heritage Area program combined with funding from the Preserve America program, the Save America's Treasures program, and historic preservation grants will go a long way toward supporting local efforts to preserve cultural, historical, natural, and recreational resources that reflect our nation's heritage.

H.R. 413 would establish the Bleeding Kansas and the Enduring Struggle for Freedom National Heritage Area. The entry of Kansas into the Union as a "free" state was marked by a legacy of struggles, sacrifices, and triumphs that provided a catalyst for racial equality in our nation. The core area is defined by 23 counties in eastern Kansas. They are geographically assembled and thematically related as areas that provide unique frameworks for understanding the great and diverse character of the United States and the development of communities and their surrounding areas. There are seven National Historic Landmarks, 32 National Register properties, three Kansas Register properties, and seven properties listed on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

The bill designates the Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance, a non-profit organization established in the State of Kansas, as the management entity for the Heritage Area and outlines its duties. It also authorizes the development of a management plan and authorizes the use of Federal funds to develop and implement that plan. If the plan is not submitted within four years of enactment of this Act, the Heritage Area becomes ineligible for Federal funding until a plan is submitted to the Secretary. Additionally, the Secretary may, at the request of the management entity, provide technical assistance and enter into cooperative agreements with other public and private entities to carry out this purpose. The use of Federal funds may not be used to acquire real property or interests in real property.

H.R. 413 would protect private property rights by requiring that owners provide, in writing, consent to be included in any request before they are eligible to receive Federal funds from the area. The private property owner in the Heritage Area would not be required to permit public access (including Federal, State, or local government access) to his or her property, or to participate in or be associated with the Heritage Area. The management entity would be an advocate for land management practices consistent with the purposes of the Heritage Area; however, H.R. 413 provides that nothing in the Act would impose any additional burden on any property owner.

There is already a foundation of stewardship, appreciation, and high public interest in the project with a broad array of public support and opportunity for private, foundation, and community partners to be involved in heritage activities. H.R. 413 would allow all Federal partners and state and local groups to participate in the management of the major facilities and resources and allow the core areas to be eligible for grants to be administered by the National Park Service.

"Bleeding Kansas" is the popular phrase describing the conflict over slavery that became nationally prominent in Kansas during the time of the American Civil War. The region was part of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, and the site of a series of struggles for freedom.

It was the first "official" Indian Country because woodland Indians removed from the east were forced to learn how to live in this semi-desert landscape. Many of the non-Indian settlers were starting over by either fleeing slavery, taking a stand for or against slavery, homesteading or remaining there when they could go no farther on any of the pioneer trails. Pro-slavery settlers from the south and anti-slavery activists from the north came to the territory because it was located at

the intersection of northern and southern expansion.

The Missouri Compromise had excluded slavery from that part of the Louisiana Purchase. The original intent behind the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 was to continue the balance of power between the free states and the slave states. By dividing the Nebraska Territory, it was assumed the northern part, Nebraska, would automatically be a free state, and Kansas, to the south and bordered by the slave state of Missouri, would automatically be a slave state. In Kansas, however, communities were burned and lives were taken as the slavery conflict continued escalating. Kansas had two capitals, one as a free state and one as a slave state. Additional

challenges included the harsh conditions of the landscape and the wide mix of views and people who lived there, including abolitionists, proslavery advocates, former soldiers, religious colonies, pioneers, homesteaders, Native Americans, including displaced Indian nations, and African Americans.

A feasibility study was commissioned by the Territorial Kansas Heritage Alliance with the support of the Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area Planning Committee, two grassroots organizations, and completed on January 30, 2004. The study process included an outline of the chronology of events, a selection of unifying themes, and a comparison of potential management strategies. A review of the extensive literature on the events that occurred in the Kansas Territory also was conducted. In addition, the study incorporated the statewide tourism strategy, in recognition that establishment of a national heritage area could help rural economic development. Numerous public meetings were held and local participants were included in the study process. Based on information collected and analyzed in this study, the area meets all ten interim criteria that the National Park Service has developed for national heritage areas to be eligible for designation.

For many people, Kansas symbolized the struggle for freedom, and the designation of a national heritage area would ensure the commemoration of this legacy. Designation also would provide increased opportunity for resource protection, education, interpretation, recreation, heritage celebration and community involvement in telling the inspirational story of Kansas. Local economies also would benefit by the increased heritage tourism as well as collaboration between diverse units of Government, businesses, tourism officials, private property owners, and nonprofit groups.

The proposed area is historically unique based on the cultural themes and resources that are represented in its publicly and privately owned properties and landscapes. The events, landscapes, and cultural resources of the area are representative of major social movements that have had a significant impact on the formation of our national society.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.