

COMMENTS OF FRED PARADY ON H.R. 4103
MARTIN'S COVE LAND TRANSFER ACT

Congressional Field Hearing
Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, and Public Lands
U.S. House of Representatives
Casper, Wyoming
May 4, 2002

Mr. Chairman, Representative Cubin, and other subcommittee members: I am Fred Parady from Rock Springs, Wyoming. Welcome to Wyoming and thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

I have the honor of serving in the Wyoming State Legislature as a member of the House of Representatives. I appear today on my own to express my personal support for the legislative concept advanced in H.R. 4103 of allowing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) to own Martin's Cove.

Expressions of Wyoming State Legislators

Last February, I joined with 54 of my fellow legislators in the House and Senate in sending a letter to the Wyoming congressional delegation expressing our support for Martin's Cove legislation. I wish to make plain that this was not official legislative action. Moreover, no specific congressional legislation on Martin's Cove had yet been introduced. Therefore, our letter was simply an expression of support for the concept of conveying ownership of Martin's Cove to the LDS Church. The legislators that signed the letter were from both political parties and were from cities throughout Wyoming. Attached to my comments is a copy of this letter (Exhibit 1).

I need to emphasize that our letter also supported "*the idea of having proceeds from the sale of Martin's Cove remain in Wyoming and directed to the short and long-term benefit of the National Historic Trails Center in Casper.*" In truth, Martin's Cove is a historic trails site in Wyoming and it is logical and advisable that proceeds from its sale be used for historic trails purposes in Wyoming. This is an important legislative change that needs to be made to H.R. 4103.

I am also submitting for the record a copy of an editorial on Martin's Cove by Senator Bob Peck of

the Wyoming State Senate (Exhibit 2). Senator Peck is a highly respected legislator. His piece accurately portrays the commendable efforts of Wyoming citizens in Freemont County who traveled long distances during winter months to fix up the former Sun Ranch to handle the needs of visitors at Martin's Cove. Members of the LDS church throughout Wyoming, including the Rock Springs area, also traveled hundreds of miles to Martin's Cove to participate in these volunteer efforts.

Positive LDS Impact on Martin's Cove

For years, I have traveled extensively throughout Wyoming, both for personal reasons and on legislative business. Prior to the involvement of the LDS church at Martin's Cove, I did not know the location of the site, even though I had passed it many times on the highway. It was my experience that Martin's Cove was inconspicuous and indistinct during the years the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), *alone*, managed the site.

That has markedly changed due to the positive impact of the LDS church members in Wyoming. The history of the Cove and its location are now more broadly known. Tens of thousands of visitors come each year to Martin's Cove, which is impressive for a site not located near a city, Interstate or even highway services.

It is vibrant with visitors, especially during the summer season.

One point bears specific emphasis: Regardless of one's view about H.R. 4103, the Wyoming members of the LDS church deserve great credit for their work in bringing the history of Martin's Cove to light and for making public visitation to the site possible. What they have done is truly commendable and their efforts at Martin's Cove are an outstanding contribution to the State.

In my view, some of the claims leveled against conveying Martin's Cove to the LDS Church are overdone. Criticism that LDS ownership of the Cove would restrict access, that it would hurt the historical heritage of the area, and that it would minimize the nearby historic sites is simply not fair and is completely incongruent with the fine work Wyoming citizens have done at the Cove.

In fact, the exceptional devotion the LDS people have demonstrated for the Cove is the very reason

they would do the best job caring for the history and ecology of the site. While I am not of the LDS faith, I firmly feel that the Martin's Cove land conveyance is the right thing to do.

Economic/Tourism Benefits for Wyoming

Wyoming's travel and tourism industry has also benefited from the involvement of the LDS church at Martin's Cove. A quarter-million people have visited the site since it opened generating millions of dollars of business for motels, restaurants, stores and service stations throughout Wyoming. Its location in the heart of the state requires visitors to spend extended time in Wyoming. The Cove has proven to be a historic site people want to see and we should do all we can to encourage people to come.

Acreage Considerations

From an acreage standpoint, final Martin's Cove legislation should only convey the essential amount of land that relates to its history. While I do not know how many acres that is, I trust this subcommittee will work with the BLM, the LDS church, historians and other stakeholders to make the best determination of conveyance boundaries.

That said, it is important to remember that the BLM manages one-eighth of the landmass of the United States, most of it concentrated in the interior west. In Wyoming, the BLM manages over 18 million surface acres, almost 30 percent of the state. This perspective is useful for two reasons.

First, the manpower and financial resources of the BLM in Wyoming are stretched over a vast area. Their inability to do much at Martin's Cove over the years clearly demonstrates the limits of these resources and argues in favor of LDS ownership.

Second, in Wyoming, where the BLM owns such a huge amount of land, I believe there is room to respect the ownership request of the LDS church, especially when they have arguably done more to advance the public and historic interests of the site than the federal government.

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Conclusion

I believe that others, like me, will offer critique and recommendations on H.R. 4103. However, whatever the deficiencies may be, they can be addressed by amendment and they do not invalidate the underlying concept the bill advances.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to respond to questions members of the Committee may have.