

**Testimony of**  
**Elise Russell**  
**National Parks Conservation Association**  
**Regarding**  
**H.R. 2234**  
**Tumacácori National Historical Park Expansion Act of 2001**  
**Before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**October 18, 2001**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Elise Russell, Legislative Analyst for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). I am testifying today on behalf of NPCA, The Archaeological Conservancy and the Sonoran Institute.

Our organizations appreciate the opportunity to state our strong support of H.R. 2234. We commend Rep. Pastor for introducing this important legislation and thank the Chairman for scheduling this hearing. NPCA urges the subcommittee to act favorably and quickly on this bill. We also recommend two minor amendments to the bill that will encourage a more comprehensive approach to preserving Tumacácori National Historical Park.

Tumacácori is only 46 acres in size but it is one of the true gems of the U.S. National Park System. The park is precious--a well-preserved resource with great historic integrity, a beautiful and tranquil site that is inspiring to visitors.

H.R. 2234 would add approximately 310 acres to the park's main unit at San José de Tumacácori Mission. These lands, located both to the north and south of the main park unit, contain portions of the original mission, including historic fields, orchards and acequia systems.

The Juan Bautista De Anza National Historic Trail also traverses the proposed addition.

In addition, there is riparian land along the Santa Cruz River with significant natural resource values. This land has thriving populations of plants and animals native to the area, including a significant population of yellow-billed cuckoos, a "species of concern" for the state of Arizona.

Permanently protecting these lands will not only save irreplaceable parts of America's heritage, it will dramatically improve benefits to the public by permitting the National Park Service to diversify visitor experiences and enrich its educational programs for the public.

Key parts of the Tumacacori story, particularly those about how different peoples interacted and ultimately

learned to live together, have lessons in today's challenging times. This is the great triumph of America--honoring diversity--a legacy that lives on. In a way, improving Tumacácori is another tangible way to keep America united, caring about each other and our collective history.

We must act now to save these lands from impending development, which threatens to ruin them forever. Subdivisions are marching directly toward the park. These lands are available today from willing sellers who want to protect the historic mission and its environment. It is unlikely these properties will ever be easily available again and the cost to protect these lands permanently will never be cheaper. Land prices in this area are headed only one way: up. Acting with foresight today will prevent having to act in haste tomorrow.

#### Suggested Amendment: Guevavi Mission

Congress should add a brief section pertaining to Guevavi Mission.

Because the Guevavi site is so small (approximately 10 acres), there is a clear need to add additional lands in order to facilitate better public access and preserve the scenic integrity of the mission, which is extremely vulnerable to development. The current general management plan (GMP) for Tumacácori NHP, approved in 1996 after extensive public involvement, recommends a 93-acre boundary expansion for the Guevavi unit.

Lands adjacent to Guevavi are owned by the City of Nogales. The City has been a good neighbor to the park, but for several years now, there has been discussion about a simple trade whereby the National Park Service would receive some City lands, and the City would receive other federal lands, closer to Nogales, in return. This would be a win-win for all parties and the general public.

Therefore, NPCA recommends the addition of a brief section to H.R. 2234, which should authorize and direct the National Park Service to work with the City of Nogales and other federal land management agencies to explore the possibilities of such an exchange and then report back to Congress within one year.

#### Suggested Amendment: General Management Plan

NPCA also recommends requiring an update to the general management plan within three years.

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would simply say that tragically, every day, prehistoric and historic archaeological sites in the United States are lost forever. Modern-day looters use backhoes and bulldozers to recover artifacts for the international market. Urban development and some agricultural methods destroy sites.

Congress has the ability, the opportunity, and the responsibility to prevent this loss of our heritage, which impoverishes both present and future generations. Promptly enacting H.R. 2234 into law will be a marvelous and tangible step forward to meet these duties. Future generations will thank you for your wisdom to act now.

Also, for the record, NPCA would like to voice support for another piece of legislation being discussed here today: H.R. 2238, the Fern Lake Conservation and Recreation Act of 2001. Fern Lake and its watershed will be important additions to Cumberland Gap National Historical Park. The Fern Lake watershed is an integral

part of the historic landscape that visitors come to see. Additionally, the acquisition of this property will protect the vista from Pinnacle Overlook, one of the park's most valuable scenic resources.

Thank you for inviting NPCA to appear before you today and for considering our views. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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