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BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING  
  
H.R 1492, TO PROVIDE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE HISTORIC CONFINEMENT SITES WHERE  
JAPANESE AMERICANS WERE DETAINED DURING WORLD WAR II

APRIL 14, 2005

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H. R. 1492, to provide for the preservation of the historic confinement sites where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II.

The Department recognizes the importance of taking steps to more fully preserve the history of the experience of Japanese Americans during World War II, when many were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to live at internment camps. However, we do not support the approach taken by H.R. 1492 to preserve this history. The Department is actively involved in many efforts to preserve the stories of the Japanese American experience in World War II. We could enhance the role we play in protecting the resources at a small cost and without using limited National Park Service appropriations for grants to pay for restoration and other types of projects for resources that are not administered by the National Park Service.

For many years, the Department has opposed legislation authorizing appropriations for grants for specified non-National Park Service projects. Many of these projects represent an important contribution to the preservation of our Nation's history, as would be the case with projects associated with the Japanese American internment camps. However, each time such legislation is enacted and appropriations follow, it further reduces a limited amount of discretionary funds available to address the priority needs of our national parks and other programs administered by the National Park Service. With the emphasis we have placed on the President's initiative to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog, it has become more important than ever to avoid authorizing funding for non-National Park Service projects that would draw funds from the National Park Service's budget.

H.R. 1492 would require the Secretary of the Interior to establish a program within the National Park Service to administer grants to public and private entities to protect, restore, interpret, acquire and take other actions with respect to the ten internment camps and other historically significant locations where Japanese Americans were detained during World War II. The grants would be made in consultation with the Japanese American National Heritage Coalition, an umbrella organization of groups that are involved in efforts to preserve one or more of the Japanese American detention sites. The bill would authorize appropriations of \$38 million for this purpose.

The Department is actively involved in preserving resources associated with the experience of Japanese Americans during World War II and collecting and disseminating information on this unfortunate chapter of our Nation's history. As recently as 1990, the National Park Service had virtually no role in preserving and interpreting this story. That changed in 1992, when Congress (1) authorized the establishment of Manzanar National Historic Site in central California, (2) directed the National Park Service to conduct a National Historic Landmark (NHL) theme study of sites associated with the detention of Japanese Americans during World War II, and (3) authorized a memorial in the Nation's Capital to honor Japanese American patriotism in World War II.

Today, the National Park Service administers two of the ten internment camps. In addition to Manzanar, the Minidoka Relocation Center in Idaho was added as a unit of the National Park System in 2001 following a presidential proclamation that designated the site as Minidoka Internment National Monument. Manzanar is now a well-established unit; its visitor center was opened last year and its annual visitation is about 80,000. Minidoka is conducting a General Management Plan and is still under development.

In addition, the National Park Service is providing technical assistance to other bureaus of the Department that have been involved in preservation efforts for these sites. Tule Lake in California, and Heart Mountain in Wyoming, are located on land administered by the Bureau of Reclamation. Topaz, in Utah, is located on land administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

In 1999, to provide the documentation needed for the NHL theme study authorized by Congress, the National Park

Service's Western Archeological and Conservation Center published an extensive compilation and analysis of resources associated with these sites. This compilation, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*, has proven to be an invaluable source of information about this subject not only for the National Park Service but also for the many organizations that are involved in the efforts to preserve these sites.

The NHL theme study directed by Congress is nearly complete. Based on that study, two nominations for landmark designation are moving forward through the Department's process: one for the internment camp at Tule Lake in California, and the other for Granada in Colorado. If those designations are finalized, those two sites will be eligible for technical assistance available to designated sites through our NHL program.

The National Park Service is also close to completing a special resource study of Bainbridge Island, Washington, which was the first location from which Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes following the issuance of Executive Order 9066, which provided the authority for the detention of Japanese Americans. This study, which was authorized by Congress in 2002, analyzes different alternatives for memorializing, preserving, and interpreting this important site. Our Pacific West Regional Office, through the National Park Service's Preservation Partnership programs, has also provided technical assistance to the Bainbridge Island community to document the community's internment experiences and the history of the Japanese on Bainbridge. That office also provided funding to train Asian-American students in documenting sites important to the history of their communities.

In addition, the National Park Service, through its National Mall and Memorial Parks unit, administers the memorial to Japanese American Patriotism in World War II, which is located about two blocks north of the U.S. Capitol Building. Our National Capital Region office assisted in establishing the memorial. We helped secure an appropriate site for the memorial, assisted in its design, and facilitated the approval process for it. The memorial honors the approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans who were relocated to the internment camps. It incorporates the names and locations of the camps, as well as the names of Japanese Americans who died in military service to the United States during World War II.

A few examples of other activities we have engaged in include:

- Establishing a lesson plan on the War Relocation Camps of World War II on the National Park Service's "Teaching with Historic Places" web site;
- Conducting oral history recording projects that entailed recording the histories of internees and other individuals associated with the World War II internment;
- Participating in a multi-agency work group supporting the preservation of the Tule Lake internment camp;
- Providing technical assistance to the non-profit organization that is supporting the preservation of the Heart Mountain camp in Wyoming;
- Providing funding to the Jerome County Historical Society, Idaho, to copy original newspapers from 1942-1945 onto microfilm for reference and research purposes, and technical assistance to develop methods to preserve internment-related materials for long-term preservation.

The Department would like to continue and build on the efforts we are already involved in on this subject. In addition to the activities already mentioned, there are other ways the National Park Service could enhance the role we play in protecting resources and interpreting the history of the Japanese American experience in World War II at a relatively small cost. For example, working in partnership with other entities that own and administer the internment camp sites, we could develop a comprehensive interpretative plan for all ten sites. We could designate a staff person to coordinate the preservation and interpretation activities among the different sites. Another possibility would be to publish a handbook on the internment camps that would be available at National Park Service bookstores. We could also develop a web-based travel itinerary on the sites.

To summarize, we believe there are appropriate ways for the National Park Service to expand upon its already significant role in increasing public awareness and understanding of the Japanese American experience during World War II. But we do not believe it is appropriate for the National Park Service budget to be used as a funding source for grants to non-Federal entities to undertake costly restoration and other types of projects at the sites of these camps. We therefore cannot support H. R. 1492.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my prepared remarks. I will be happy to respond to questions from you or other members of the committee.