

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks & Public Lands

Witness Statement

STATEMENT OF KATHERINE H. STEVENSON, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL RESOURCES STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CONCERNING H.R. 3745, A bill to AUTHORIZE THE ADDITION OF CERTAIN PARCELS TO THE EFFIGY MOUNDS NATIONAL MONUMENT, IOWA.

JUNE 8, 2000

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the subcommittee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 3745, a bill to authorize the addition of certain parcels to the Effigy Mounds National Monument, Iowa.

H.R. 3745 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire approximately 1,100 acres on five tracts of lands abutting Effigy Mounds National Monument. The Department of the Interior supports enactment of this legislation with amendments to correct the size of the Riverfront tract from 15 acres to 50 acres and to increase the authorization of appropriations from \$750,000 to \$1 million. This increase would ensure sufficient funds are authorized for the purchase of all of the tracts in the long term.

This position is consistent with the park's August 1999 general management plan (GMP) amendment and environmental assessment (EA) and a June 1999 boundary review. The largest tract, the approximately 1,054-acre Ferguson/Kistler property, has been in the State forest reserve program for the past 20 years and therefore has not been on the county tax rolls. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has recently signed a contract to purchase this land for approximately \$1.2 million with the intent to sell this property to the National Park Service for \$750,000. Of the remaining 80 acres on the other four tracts, the State of Iowa owns 30 acres and 50 acres are privately owned.

Effigy Mounds National Monument was established by presidential proclamation in 1949. It was established to preserve a representative and outstanding example of a significant phase of the prehistoric American Indian mound building culture, to protect wildlife, scenic and other natural values of the area and to provide for scientific study of its features.

Indian burial mounds are found in a large part of the United States; however, effigy mounds are found only in a relatively small area in northeastern Iowa, southeastern Minnesota, and eastern Wisconsin. Effigy Mounds National Monument includes 1,481 acres in three units; the north and south units which overlook the Mississippi River, and the Sny Magill unit, which lies on the river bottom land. These three areas preserve over 200 mound sites and represent three known mound building cultures. There are four distinct mound types including outstanding examples of effigy mounds, or mounds in the shape of birds and bears. The monument's "Marching Bears Mound Group" is one of the finest in the country and the Sny Magill contains the largest extant concentration of Indian mounds (about 100) in the United States. The mounds are a legacy of the belief systems and practices of prehistoric, indigenous peoples.

The landscape of the monument reveals evidence of a continuum of cultures and their relationships to the environment over a span of at least 2,500 years. The monument's varied landforms and habitats, characteristic of the unglaciated "driftless zone", provide exceptional diversity of plant and animal species. These natural resources are important both for understanding past lifeways that depended on them and monitoring the health of present ecosystems.

During the planning process for the GMP in the early 1990s, several tracts of land adjacent to the monument were

considered for inclusion within the boundary. Public response from organizations such as the Allamakee County Tourism and Economic Development Commission and the Audubon Society favored the acquisition of these tracts. However, at that time it was decided that the properties were not essential to preserve and interpret, were not likely to be under severe development pressure in the next ten years, and could be preserved through other means. Today, ten years later, the NPS has reassessed this view in light of studies assessing the significance of resources on these lands, recent economic development trends in northeast Iowa, and the failure of serious efforts by other parties to secure important parcels for long-term preservation.

The 1,054 acre Ferguson/Kistler tract, which is adjacent to the park, is a key property. This land contains a number of prehistoric mounds; two bear effigy mounds in very good condition which have a rare orientation of the bears, which are lying on their left side; Iowa state recorded archeological sites; historical sites including potential village sites; rock shelters and the Jefferson Davis Sawmill. Natural resources present include river otters and jeweled shooting stars, both on Iowa's threatened species list, and red-shoulder hawks, which is on the state endangered list. To prevent this tract from being lost for use of forest resources, second-home development, or new agri-industrial facilities, which are intensifying in northeast Iowa, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has signed a contract for this property.

Management objectives for Effigy Mounds National Monument emphasize preservation of the cultural and natural resources, and the historic scene of the monument. In the GMP amendment and EA are plans that address the visitor use, interpretation and development of each unit of the park. Ultimately, the Ferguson/Kistler tract will have appropriate provisions for visitor access to the tract, including trails leading to the effigy mounds. With cooperative efforts among public land managers and local jurisdictions, this area could provide recreational trails and new canoeing, camping, birding and wildlife viewing opportunities. A small increase in base funding (less than \$250,000) would be needed to provide maintenance, interpretive, resources protection and resource management services for the acquired areas. National Park Service funds for land acquisition would be subject to the availability of appropriations and priorities.

As seen from the blufftop viewpoints, the panorama of the undeveloped Ferguson/Kistler property appears to be a seamless extension of the cultural and natural landscape represented within the monument. Both the resources and the viewshed are significant to the mission and purpose of Effigy Mounds National Monument and this property will help ensure that the visual and historical integrity of the site is maintained. Also, this acquisition, which is one of the largest remaining blocks of unbroken forest in Northeast Iowa, will connect Effigy Mounds National Monument with Yellow River State Forest, with over 4,000 acres and 7.8 river miles of the Yellow River in public trust. This linkage would enable the public to enjoy recreation opportunities not available within the monument while protecting ecosystems with endangered and threatened species, cultural landscapes and a viewshed critical to the monument.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or members of the subcommittee may have.

Proposed Amendments to H.R. 3745

Effigy Mounds National Monument Expansion

- ❑ On page 3, line 2, strike "approximately 15 acres" and insert "approximately 50 acres"
- ❑ On page 3, at the end of line 21, add the following: "Any parcel included within the boundary pursuant to this subsection shall be administered by the Secretary as part of the national monument."
- ❑ On page 4, line 3, strike "\$750,000" and insert "\$1,000,000"

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