

**Testimony on H.R. 3401**

**The  
California Five Mile Regional Learning Center  
Transfer Act**

**Presented By**

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**House Subcommittee on Forests and  
Forest Health  
Committee on Resources  
Scott McInnis, Chairman**

**April 10, 2002**

Chairman McInnis and Members of the House Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 3401, the California Five Mile Regional Learning Center Transfer Act.

My name is Terry Bradley; Deputy Superintendent for Administrative Services for the Clovis Unified School District and it is my honor to represent our school district at today's hearing in support of H.R. 3401, the "California Five Mile Regional Learning Center Transfer Act" introduced by the Honorable George Radanovich in the House of Representatives on December 4, 2001. As part of my testimony, there are several exhibits that I ask be incorporated as part of the record.

The Clovis Unified School District is located in Fresno County, which is the heart of the great Central Valley in California. Clovis Unified serves approximately 33,500 students in grades K-12. Clovis students live in the cities of Clovis and Fresno plus parts of the County of Fresno. I have been on the staff of Clovis Unified since 1976.

Clovis Unified has leased the Five Mile Regional Learning Center from the Forest Service under a Special Use Permit since 1989. During this time period, we have established an excellent working relationship with the Forest Service. We fully expect that this cooperative relationship between the Clovis Unified School District and the Forest Service will continue if title to the Five Mile Regional Learning Center conveys to our school district.

The Regional Learning Center is located on approximately 27.1 acres in the Miwok Ranger District of the Stanislaus National Forest at approximately 4,100 feet in elevation. The nearest city to the Regional Learning Center is the City of Sonora. The 27.1-acre site was initially developed during the early 1960's by the Forest Service and consists of several barracks, a cafeteria/kitchen building, classrooms, and gymnasium and shop buildings. In 1999 Clovis Unified and the Forest Service amended the Special Use Permit to add approximately 93 acres adjacent to the Regional Learning Center for use for outdoor educational purposes.

The Regional Learning Center is used as an Outdoor Environmental Educational School for students in fourth through twelfth grade. During the 2000-01 school year, the Regional Learning Center served more than 14,000 students from 140 schools and 60 school districts from throughout the State of California. Since CUSD assumed management of the Center, more than 160,000 students have benefited from the Center's programs. Classes range from forest to raptor studies with an emphasis on natural resource conservation. In addition to our environmental education program, classes are also offered on character development, team building and individual challenge activities such as high rope climbing. A more thorough description of educational programs offered to students at the Regional Learning Center is included in our written testimony as an exhibit.

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The Regional Learning Center is also used for conferences, workshops and athletic camps for both our

youth and adults. A sample of the activities hosted by the Center during the past year include a technology conference for educators, the California Department of Forestry Academy, several summer basketball camps and retreats for both youth and adults.

The buildings and structures at the Regional Learning Center have been in existence since the early 1960's. Because of financial shortfalls, the Forest Service has not been able to maintain or operate these buildings. Since taking over the operation of the Regional Learning Center in 1989, Clovis Unified School District has spent more than \$1 million each year operating the Center. During the last fiscal year, our operating expenses exceeded \$1.2 million. Clovis has invested more than \$14 million in the operations of the Learning Center.

In addition to the operating costs, Clovis is prepared to invest the funds necessary to modernize and improve the Regional Learning Center's facilities. However, because Clovis Unified does not own the land or buildings, we are prohibited from spending District or State money for capital facility renovations or improvements at the Regional Learning Center. Capital investments must be made now to continue the Regional Learning Center. With title to the Center's land and buildings Clovis can use District and State funds to make the necessary facility improvements.

H.R. 3401 will transfer ownership of the Regional Learning Center to the Clovis Unified School District. Approval of H.R. 3401 is necessary so that capital renovations and improvements vital to the continued use of the Regional Learning Center can and will be completed. Otherwise the condition of the Center's buildings and infrastructure will result in the discontinuation of the Regional Center's operation.

According to a Forest Service representative, the Regional Learning Center facility has outlived its life by years and if it were not for the efforts of the Clovis Unified School District, the buildings would be in a state of disrepair useable to no one. In a letter to our District dated June 5, 2000, Ben Del Villar, the Stanislaus National Forest Supervisor, stated that, "We have considered your request and believe that your acquisition of the Learning Center would be in the interest of the public and the Forest Service."

Clovis Unified is committed to invest \$5 million over 5 years in capital renovations and improvements to the Regional Learning Center if H.R. 3401 is approved. This investment is in addition to the \$1.2 million annual expenditure provided by CUSD for operations and routine maintenance. Also, we are committed to continuing to expand and enhance our outdoor educational curriculum to provide students from throughout California with the best experience possible during their stay at our facility.

H.R. 3401 would also authorize a new Special Use permit to continue the authorization for our school district to use the adjacent 93+ acres as presently used for environmental program activities. H.R. 3401 provides that title to the real property conveyed under the Act would revert if the Clovis Unified School District discontinues its operation of the Five Mile Regional Learning Center.

Included with our written testimony is a full description of the educational program offered at the Regional Learning Center along with maps that identify the location of the Regional Learning Center and adjacent property that is affected by H.R. 3401. Also, we have attached as exhibits several letters sent to members of the California Congressional delegation from schools throughout the State of California. These letters are

from school districts that have utilized the Regional Learning Center and express support for the proposed legislation.

In closing, we urge your support and approval for this legislation that should be considered non-controversial and a wonderful example of effective local, state and federal government cooperation. The federal costs of this transfer are administrative only and negligible compared to the investment Clovis Unified is willing to make in both operational expenditures and capital facility improvements. The result will be the continuation and enhancement of this valuable outdoor educational program and the continuation of Outdoor Environmental programs utilized and appreciated by school and community groups throughout California.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration of H.R. 3401. We look forward to working with the Committee and the Forest Service on this legislation.

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