

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS CONCERNING S. 3873, A BILL TO DESIGNATE THE OUTDOOR AMPHITHEATER AT THE BLUE RIDGE MUSIC CENTER IN GALAX, VIRGINIA, AS THE "RICK BOUCHER AMPHITHEATER".

SEPTEMBER 21, 2022

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3873, a bill to designate the outdoor amphitheater at the Blue Ridge Music Center in Galax, Virginia, as the "Rick Boucher Amphitheater".

The Blue Ridge Music Center (Center) hosts an average of 27,000 visitors annually and another roughly 20,000 concert goers attend the Center's Roots of American Music concert series. The Center is owned by the National Park Service and operated through a partnership with Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. It is situated on a 2,500-acre campus with multiple facilities for visitors and park neighbors to interact with and learn about the traditional music of the region.

Facilities at the Center include the outdoor amphitheater, a small indoor theater suited for lectures and smaller performances, an indoor visitor center and museum gallery which includes *The Roots of American Music* permanent exhibition. A covered breezeway accommodates daily Mid-Day Mountain Music concerts by local musicians that are free to the public.

Former United States Representative Rick Boucher, who represented Virginia's 9th District for almost 30 years, was an early supporter of the Center and remained so throughout his tenure in Congress. Congressman Boucher played an instrumental role in securing funding for the construction of the Center, and his efforts helped ensure that the vision of early proponents for the Center, including the late Joe Wilson, former Executive Director of the National Council for Traditional Arts, and former NPS Director Gary Everhardt, could be realized. The Department is grateful for Congressman Boucher's work to support the National Park Service.

S. 3873 would recognize and honor former Representative Boucher by designating the outdoor amphitheater at the Center as the "Rick Boucher Amphitheater." The NPS generally discourages the naming of park features except when there is a compelling justification and at least five years have elapsed since the death of the person. However, we recognize that Congress may also specifically authorize the placement of such recognition. In this instance, the Department defers to Congress and does not object to S. 3873.

Chairman King, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.