

STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 1926 AND H.R. 2156, BILLS TO ESTABLISH THE SAINT FRANCIS DAM DISASTER NATIONAL MEMORIAL IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

AUGUST 15, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1926 and H.R. 2156, bills to establish a national memorial and national monument to commemorate those killed by the collapse of the Saint Francis Dam on March 12, 1928, and for other purposes.

The Department of the Interior defers to the Department of Agriculture for a position on S. 1926 and H.R. 2156 since the purpose of the legislation is to establish a national monument and a national memorial in the Angeles National Forest, administered by the U.S. Forest Service in Los Angeles County. Both the national monument and the national memorial would be located at a site that is not under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior, and this bill does not provide for any management or funding by the National Park Service.

The Saint Francis Dam was one of several large infrastructure projects constructed in the early 20th century to help control water flow to southern California. On March 12, 1928, the dam breached, and the resulting flood took more than 400 lives. The collapse of this dam is considered one of the worst civil engineering failures in the 20th century. S. 1926 and H.R. 2156 authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to establish the memorial to honor the disaster victims. The bills also authorize the creation of a 440-acre Saint Francis Dam Disaster National Monument that will encompass the site of the Saint Francis Dam National Memorial.

The National Park Service has management responsibility for a large number national memorials and national monuments, and the public often associates both types of designated sites with the National Park Service. In this case, however, the national monument and the national memorial would be located deep within the Angeles National Forest and would fall within the responsibility of the Forest Service.

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