

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. 3287 AND H. R. 5655, BILLS TO ESTABLISH THE CAMP NELSON HERITAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT IN THE STATE OF KENTUCKY AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

AUGUST 15, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3287 and H.R. 5655, bills to establish the Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument in the State of Kentucky as a unit of the National Park System, and for other purposes.

The Department supports enactment of S. 3287 and H.R. 5655 with amendments described later in this statement. As a nationally significant Civil War site, where the major landowner has indicated a desire to donate property for inclusion in the National Park System, Camp Nelson represents an exceptional opportunity to preserve and interpret for future generations a critical chapter in Civil War history.

S. 3287 and H.R. 5655 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument as a unit of the National Park System after meeting specified requirements. The proposed boundary of the monument includes land within the Camp Nelson National Historic Landmark. The bills include authorities for land acquisition and administration that are commonly included in legislation establishing a unit of the National Park System.

Camp Nelson is nationally significant as one of the nation's largest recruitment and training centers for African American soldiers during the American Civil War and as the site of a large refugee camp for the wives and children of the African American soldiers who were escaping slavery and seeking freedom. Reactions to the November 1864 expulsion of Camp Nelson refugees led to official changes in U.S. Army policy regarding the care of refugees at U.S. Army posts, and assisted in the passage of an act of Congress that freed all wives and children of U.S. Colored Troops. Events at Camp Nelson also influenced the policies and practices of abolitionists and health reformers.

Camp Nelson has excellent archeological integrity and its resources have the potential to provide nationally significant data on questions related to Civil War era economic conditions, social relationships, settlement patterns, material supply, and the daily life of its racially and socially diverse military and civilian populations, as well as data on questions related to camp fortification, and building design and layout. The information gained from these archeological resources has the potential to add to our understanding of the transformation of African American families from enslaved to free, and the survival and persistence of these families and their culture in the face of tremendous adversity.

Camp Nelson Historic and Archeological District was added to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom in 2008 and designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2013. The majority of land included in the Landmark is owned by Jessamine County and managed as a park open to the public. Camp Nelson Civil War Heritage Park protects and interprets what remains of the historic Civil War-era Camp Nelson site. Because of its rural location, the Camp Nelson site is one of the best-preserved Civil War era depots, hospitals, recruiting centers, and refugee campsites in the nation. Much of the site retains a high level of integrity and the landscape primarily consists of pastures, open fields, and woodlands. Camp Nelson's well preserved landscape includes numerous features from the Civil War era, including earthen fortifications, entrenchments, a depot magazine, building foundations, and historic road remnants. The Oliver Perry House ("White House") is the only surviving extant structure associated with Camp Nelson's historic period of significance.

Strong local support for including the site in the National Park System has been indicated through public meetings and comments. In addition, Jessamine County, the primary landowner within the proposed boundary, is prepared to donate its holdings for inclusion in the new unit. All funding for the unit would be subject to National Park Service priorities and the availability of appropriations.

The Department recommends that S. 3287 and H.R. 5655 be amended in the following ways:

First, S. 3287 and H.R. 5655 would name the site the "Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument". The Department recommends removing "Heritage" from the name, which would make it consistent with the name used for the National Historic Landmark designation. The word "Heritage" does not provide any additional historical significance or meaning to the site.

Second, S. 3287 and H.R. 5655 provide land acquisition authority by means of donation, purchase with donated funds, or exchange. The Department recommends amending the bills to also include the authority to purchase lands with appropriated funds. Such authority is common for other National Park Service units. That authority would allow the owners of private property within the boundary the opportunity to sell their lands to the Federal government. Even if the owners are not interested in selling their land at the current time, this authority provides the flexibility for them to make that decision in the future if circumstances change. Before the National Park Service would seek to acquire any property, whether by purchase, donation, or exchange, it would take into consideration the condition of any structures on the property that would add to the Service's deferred maintenance backlog. Any funding to purchase land would be subject to future appropriations from Congress.

Third, S. 3287 and H.R. 5655 include a reference to a map that was developed by the National Park Service in consultation with the sponsor of H.R. 5655, Representative Barr, as well as local landowners. However, based on additional conversations with these landowners, the National Park Service would recommend referencing an updated map. We would be pleased to provide that map to the bill sponsors and the Committee.

Fourth, S. 3287 and H.R. 5655 include two conditions for establishing Camp Nelson Heritage National Monument as a unit of the National Park System: (1) entering into an agreement for

donation of the property, and (2) acquiring sufficient land to constitute a manageable unit. Because land must be acquired prior to the establishment of the Monument, an agreement evidencing an intent to donate land is a precondition that does not need to be included in the legislation. We therefore recommend striking the first condition.

Finally, H.R. 5655, but not S. 3287, contains language stipulating that no private or non-Federal property shall be managed as part of the Monument without the written consent of the landowner. This provision is unnecessary as the National Park Service does not currently have authority to manage non-Federal property as part of a unit in this manner. Furthermore, the addition of this language could be read to suggest that it does have such authority. The Department recommends striking this provision from H.R. 5655.

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