

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. 1097, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE CÉSAR E. CHÁVEZ AND THE FARMWORKER MOVEMENT NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK IN THE STATES OF CALIFORNIA AND ARIZONA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JUNE 21, 2023

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.1097, a bill to establish the César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park in the states of California and Arizona, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 1097.

S. 1097 would redesignate the existing César E. Chávez National Monument in Keene, California as the César E. Chávez and the Farmworker Movement National Historical Park. The bill would authorize the Secretary to include within the boundary of the historical park: The Forty Acres in Delano, California; the Santa Rita Center in Phoenix, Arizona; and McDonnell Hall in San Jose, California. The additional sites would only be included in the boundary upon acquisition of the land, or upon entering a written agreement with the owner of the site that the site would be managed in accordance with the Act. S. 1097 would also authorize a study to determine the feasibility of designating the approximately 300-mile march taken by farmworkers between Delano and Sacramento, California, in 1966, as the Farmworker Peregrinación National Historic Trail.

César E. Chávez National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation 8884 on October 8, 2012, to preserve, interpret, and commemorate the collective struggles and achievements of the farm worker movement, associated historic resources, and the life and legacy of César E. Chávez. The site was also designated a National Historic Landmark in 2012.

The César E. Chávez National Monument is on the 116-acre property known as "La Paz," which served as headquarters, residence, and training center for the United Farm Workers (UFW) beginning in 1971. The site continues to serve as the headquarters of the UFW and the César Chávez Foundation. The site includes the home of César and Helen Chávez, a memorial garden where they are buried and martyrs to the farmworker movement are honored, and a visitor center in the former UFW administration building, which includes exhibits and César Chávez's office and original furnishings. In managing the César E. Chávez National Monument, the National Park Service (NPS) works closely with the National Chávez Center of the César Chávez Foundation.

The Forty Acres property was acquired by the Farmworkers Service Center in 1966. This organization and its successors proceeded to build a service station, multipurpose hall, health

clinic, and retirement housing. César Chávez conducted his 1968 fast in the service station building, and his 1988 fast in the retirement village. The UFW Organizing Committee was headquartered at The Forty Acres from 1969-71, and the contracts that ended the 1965-70 strike against Delano-area growers were signed here. Many public events and rallies were based at the Forty Acres. As a property purchased, built, and used by farm workers, The Forty Acres embodies the farm labor movement itself. The Forty Acres was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2008. Owned and managed by the César Chávez Foundation, it continues to function as a UFW field office and a site for special events.

The Santa Rita Center was built by the nearby Catholic parish around 1960 as a classroom and community hall. César Chávez's fast at the Santa Rita Center in 1972 focused national attention on farm workers and their organized protest against restrictive legislation, and it invigorated two social movements—the Chicano movement and the farm labor movement. Thousands of Arizona farm workers, and influential supporters such as Coretta Scott King, came to the Santa Rita Center to participate in rallies, celebrate nightly Masses, give voice to the movement's newly adopted slogan "¡Sí Se Puede!" and pledge their support for La Causa. The building is owned by Chicanos Por La Causa, is now surrounded largely by vacant and industrial properties, and is occasionally used for special meetings and events.

McDonnell Hall is the parish hall associated with Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in San Jose, California, and is the primary site from which César Chávez, Father Donald McDonnell, and community organizer Fred Ross served, organized, and educated farmworkers, and conducted the work of the Community Services Organization in the 1950s. The site was used for farmworker organizing activities into the 1970s. It continues to be associated with the church and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2016.

In 2013, the NPS completed a special resource study to determine if sites significant in the life of César Chávez and the farm labor movement met the criteria for inclusion in the national park system. The selected alternative for the study included La Paz, The Forty Acres, the Santa Rita Center, and McDonnell Hall in the proposed national historical park concept, noting that most sites would remain in their existing ownership and management would occur through cooperative agreements and partnerships.

The march along the Farmworker Peregrinación route, proposed for study as a National Historic Trail, was a milestone event in the history of the farm labor movement. More than 100 men and women set out from Delano on March 17, 1966, and thousands of farm workers and their families joined in for short stretches along the way. The march route passed through 42 cities and towns of the San Joaquin Valley, as well as vast stretches of the agricultural landscape. By the time the marchers entered Sacramento on Easter Sunday, April 10, 1966, thousands of people had joined them, and the farm worker movement had secured a contract and attracted new waves of support from across the country.

We appreciate that S. 1097 incorporates provisions that the National Park Service recommended to the version of this legislation that was introduced in the 117th Congress which address the concerns that the National Park Service had with the previous version and will facilitate more effective implementation of this bill upon enactment.

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