

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. WHITESELL, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1335, A BILL TO REVISE THE BOUNDARIES OF GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK TO INCLUDE THE GETTYSBURG TRAIN STATION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

October 4, 2011

Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 1335, a bill to add the historic Lincoln Train Station in the Borough of Gettysburg and 45 acres at the base of Big Round Top to Gettysburg National Military Park in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

The Department supports enactment of this legislation.

Gettysburg National Military Park protects major portions of the site of the largest battle waged during this nation's Civil War. Fought in the first three days of July 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg resulted in a victory for Union forces and successfully ended the second invasion of the North by Confederate forces commanded by General Robert E. Lee. Historians have referred to the battle as a major turning point in the war - the "High Water Mark of the Confederacy." It was also the Civil War's bloodiest single battle, resulting in over 51,000 soldiers killed, wounded, captured or missing.

The Soldiers' National Cemetery within the park was dedicated on November 19, 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln delivered his immortal Gettysburg Address. The cemetery contains more than 7,000 interments including over 3,500 from the Civil War. The park currently includes nearly 6,000 acres, with 26 miles of park roads and over 1,400 monuments, markers, and memorials.

Gettysburg's Lincoln Train Station was built in 1858 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The station served as a hospital during the Battle of Gettysburg, and the wounded and the dead were transported from Gettysburg through this station in the aftermath of battle. President Abraham Lincoln arrived at this station when he visited to give the Gettysburg Address.

Gettysburg National Military Park's 1999 General Management Plan called for expanding cooperative relationships and partnerships with the Borough of Gettysburg and other sites "to ensure that resources closely linked to the park, the battle, and the non-combatant civilian involvement in the battle and its aftermath are appropriately protected and used." In particular, the plan stated that the National Park Service would initiate "cooperation agreements with willing owners, and seek the assistance of the Borough of Gettysburg and other appropriate entities to preserve, operate and manage the Wills House and Lincoln Train Station."

The Borough of Gettysburg Interpretive Plan called for the Lincoln Train Station to be used as a downtown information and orientation center for visitors – where all park visitors would arrive after coming downtown – to receive information and orientation to downtown historic attractions, including the David Wills House. This is the house where Lincoln stayed the night before delivering the Gettysburg Address. The Interpretive Plan also called for rehabilitation of the Wills House, which was added to the park’s boundary through Public Law 106-290 in October 2000, and is now a historic house museum in the borough and an official site within Gettysburg National Military Park. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the David Wills House is operated by Main Street Gettysburg at no cost to the National Park Service.

The Lincoln Train Station is next to the downtown terminus of Freedom Transit, Gettysburg’s shuttle system, which started operations in July 2009 with a grant from the Federal Transit Administration in the Department of Transportation.

In 2006, the Borough of Gettysburg completed rehabilitation of the Lincoln Train Station with funds from a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania grant. Due to a lack of funds, however, the borough has been unable to operate a visitor information and orientation center there. Through formal vote of the Borough Council, the Borough of Gettysburg has asked the National Park Service to take over the ownership and operations of the train station. The anticipated acquisition cost for the completely rehabilitated train station is approximately \$772,000, subject to an appraisal by the federal government. Funding to acquire this land would be subject to the availability of appropriations and NPS priorities.

The park has a preliminary commitment from the Gettysburg Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) to provide all staffing requirements for operations of an information and orientation center in the train station, thereby alleviating the park of staff costs. Anticipated operating costs for the train station that will be the responsibility of the NPS are limited to utility costs, the rest will be paid by the Gettysburg CVB. In the event that the Gettysburg CVB is unable to provide staffing and funding for operations, the NPS would seek another park partner to cover these costs and requirements.

This legislation would also add 45 acres near Big Round Top along Plum Run in Cumberland Township, Pennsylvania, to the boundary of the park. The 45-acre tract of land is adjacent to the Gettysburg National Military Park and is within the Battlefield Historic District. The land is at the southern base of Big Round Top at the southern end of the Gettysburg battlefield. There were cavalry skirmishers in this area during the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1863, but the real significance is environmental. The tract has critical wetlands and wildlife habitat related to Plum Run. Wayne and Susan Hill donated it to the Gettysburg Foundation in April 2009. The Gettysburg Foundation plans to donate fee title interest in the parcel to the National Park Service once it is within the park boundary. It abuts land already owned by the National Park Service.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or members of the committee may have regarding the Department’s position on H.R. 1335.