

Statement of Fran Berting
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For the House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation
On H.R. 1208, To Establish the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos,
New Mexico and Hanford, Washington and for other purposes
April 12, 2013

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and Members of the Committee, I thank you for inviting me to testify on H.R. 1208, a bill To Establish the Manhattan Project National Park in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos, New Mexico, and Hanford, Washington, and for other purposes. I would also like to thank the co-sponsors of this bill: Representative Ben Ray Luján, Representative Doc Hastings, and Representative Chuck Fleischmann. I am Fran Berting, and I serve as a County Councilor for the Incorporated County of Los Alamos. I will present this testimony on behalf of the Incorporated County of Los Alamos in conjunction with the Los Alamos Historical Society¹. Both the Incorporated County of Los Alamos and the Los Alamos Historical Society support H.R. 1208.

The key points of my testimony are:

1. The Manhattan Project has been described as one of the most significant historical events of the 20th century and therefore the key sites at Los Alamos, Oak Ridge and Hanford should be preserved in a National Historical Park.
2. Throughout northern New Mexico, there is broad support to establish a National Park unit at Los Alamos. Our County and many other groups have been working cooperatively to support this legislation and the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

¹ The Los Alamos Historical Society is a non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve, promote, and communicate the remarkable history and inspiring stories of Los Alamos and its people for our community, for the global audience, and for future generations. Among its many activities, the Historical Society operates the Los Alamos Historical Museum and owns, in a life trust, the World War II home of Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, scientific director of the Manhattan Project. As the owner of this home in the Los Alamos Historic District, the Historical Society is the property owner within the potential boundary of the park. Additionally, helping to establish the Manhattan Project National Historical Park is one of seven planks the Historical Society's strategic plan.

3. Establishment of a National Park unit at Los Alamos will have a positive impact on the citizens and economy of northern New Mexico.
4. For a Manhattan Project National Historical Park to be successful, we need legislation that allows for partnerships among federal agencies, community groups, individuals and others.

Due to their historical significance, the Manhattan Project sites should be preserved in a National Historical Park

Historians have called the Manhattan Project the most significant undertaking of the 20th century. Employing hundreds of thousands at its peak, located in widely scattered, secret communities, the project brought an end to World War II and ushered in the atomic age. The Incorporated County of Los Alamos is pleased to support H.R. 1208, a bill to establish the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Los Alamos, New Mexico and Hanford, Washington.

At its heart, the story of the Manhattan Project is an amazing episode of our great nation's history. It brought together the brightest scientists, many of them immigrants who came to this country seeking freedom. They faced pressure to end the world's most horrible war by creating something that had only existed in theory. The Manhattan Project is a story about young people with a can-do spirit who brought about a great technological achievement. It is the story of unleashing a mysterious force of nature and of fostering fear and uncertainty about the future of humankind. It is a story about creativity. It is a scientific story, a soldier's story, a spy story, and a human story. The story of the Manhattan Project is one that, from the perspectives of all who participated and all who were affected, must be told.

The County and the Historical Society fully support this bill's efforts to "enhance the protection and preservation of such resources and provide for comprehensive interpretation and public understanding of this nationally significant story in 20th century American history."

Tied together under the auspices of a national park, the Manhattan Project industrial sites

in Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Hanford, along with the places where soldiers and scientists lived and formed communities, will create a full picture of the history.

Some critics have said that a national park dedicated to the Manhattan Project will glorify the atomic bomb or create a theme park for weapons of mass destruction. We disagree. The National Park Service, of all government agencies, is the most trusted for telling complete stories from all sides—the good and bad, the painful and the poignant. Parks and monuments that commemorate battles or massacres do not celebrate ugly moments in American history. They teach about them; they help us, as a nation, to reflect and learn. The nation needs to understand the Manhattan Project from all sides.

There is broad support for this bill throughout Los Alamos County and our region

In 2007, recognizing the impact of a possible national park on our community, our County Council appointed an ad hoc committee to determine what such a park might look like in Los Alamos. The details of the committee recommendations are attached to this testimony as “Attachment A.” In summary, the committee envisioned a downtown national park visitor center where guests would learn about the Manhattan Project and then be sent to existing venues to learn more, a recommendation the National Park Service adopted in its final report to Congress.

The communities called out in this legislation—Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, and Hanford—fully support this park. In 2008, the ad hoc committee held public meetings in Los Alamos as well as meetings with potential partners, from tour guides to the nearby pueblos. After some initial—and false—concern that the park service might take over the iconic Fuller Lodge in downtown Los Alamos as a park headquarters was resolved, the community came out fully in support of the park. The County Council passed a resolution to that effect in February 2010 (see “Attachment B”). We have had several meetings with our counterparts in Hanford and Oak Ridge to discuss park possibilities. In short, we are excited about this park and are happy to assist the Department of Interior, the Department of Energy, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and others to make it happen. We believe it will be a benefit not only to Los Alamos but to nearby communities, as well.

A Manhattan Project National Historical Park Unit at Los Alamos will provide economic benefits to northern New Mexico

With, by the Park Services own estimate, hundreds of thousands of additional annual visitors the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will provide economic benefits to northern New Mexico. The region will need workers not only in tourism and service industries but in construction and other related industries to support the Park.

As the ad hoc committee suggested, the story of the Manhattan Project isn't just about world-class scientists. The story includes people from the rural communities and pueblos surrounding Los Alamos, mostly Native Americans and Hispanics, who provided the backbone of a labor force that built and maintained the laboratories and facilities, cleaned the houses, and drove the trucks. The Manhattan Project forever changed rustic northern New Mexico. In fact, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park will, once again, transform these communities, creating an economic driver based on heritage tourism that provides jobs, educational opportunities, and improved futures to traditionally under-served communities.

Legislation must allow for partnerships among federal agencies, communities, historical societies and other interested organizations and individuals

Finally, we appreciate with enthusiasm the statement in Section 3 of this bill that one purpose of the park is “to assist the Department of Energy, Historical Park communities, historical societies, and other interested organizations and individuals in efforts to preserve and protect the historically significant resources associated with the Manhattan Project.” Protecting these resources is something the Los Alamos Historical Society has been working on for nearly fifty years. Partnerships and cooperative agreements between federal agencies, local governments, non-profit groups, and even private property owners will make this park happen, bringing together widespread resources for the benefit of our nation as the Manhattan Project did years ago.

Again, I urge you to view the recommendations from the ad hoc committee, specifically the section about partnerships. Manhattan Project resources, from museums to the laboratory and from tour guides to the famous “gatekeeper” office at 109 E. Palace Avenue in Santa Fe, are

dispersed and disorganized when it comes to the theme of Manhattan Project history. The national park will bring these resources together, along with those of Hanford and Oak Ridge, for visitors to understand a bigger picture.

We are also especially pleased to see in the final section of the bill that both the Department of Interior and the Department of Energy will be able to accept monetary or service donations for the park. This is particularly important to restoration work at Los Alamos National Laboratory and will assist the lab in preserving a significant historic site. One individual has been waiting in the wings for years to donate to the site's restoration but has had no mechanism for giving the money. The park will allow this preservation project to take place.

Conclusion

In sum, we look forward to sharing our stories with the many visitors a national historical park will bring in addition to sharing our resources with the National Park Service to assist in creation of the park. Along with many community partners who have worked on this project, the Incorporated County of Los Alamos in conjunction with the Los Alamos Historical Society supports the establishment of the Manhattan Project National Historical Park in order to preserve and teach this important history. We have also briefed the Regional Coalition of LANL Communities and they support our efforts. The park has tremendous support in our community. We believe it will have economic benefit to northern New Mexico. We are heartened to see the Department of Energy willing to work with the Department of Interior and other partners to make this world-changing history accessible. We thank you for your leadership and support.

ATTACHMENT A

Recommendations to the Los Alamos County Council from the Manhattan Project National Historical Park (MPNHP) Ad Hoc Committee 04/02/2008

I. Purpose

In 2004, Congress approved and the President signed legislation directing the NPS to conduct a special resource study to determine the national significance, suitability, and feasibility of designating one or more historic sites of the Manhattan Project for potential inclusion in the National Park System. This park could include non-contiguous sites in Los Alamos, Oak Ridge, Hanford, and Dayton. The NPS held meetings in each of the communities during the spring and summer of 2006 to gather public input.

In August 2007, Los Alamos County Council approved the establishment of an ad hoc committee to help determine what the proposed non-contiguous Manhattan Project National Historical Park might look like in Los Alamos. This committee is comprised of representatives involved in historic preservation and tourism from throughout the community, including Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL). After approval by Council, the committee will present its plan to NPS representatives when they come to Los Alamos for a second round of community meetings in 2008.

II. Committee Conduct

The committee began meeting bi-weekly in August 2007 and discussed several ideas, such as what “attractions” might be included in a national park and who locally might participate. These ideas were expanded upon and refined over time. A great deal of Manhattan Project history has already been preserved in our community in places such as the Los Alamos Historical Museum, the Bradbury Science Museum, and the Oppenheimer House. The committee members do not believe that the NPS needs to “reinvent the wheel.”

In October, the committee took a special “behind the fence” tour of sites at LANL which may be included in the park, either as part of periodic tours or which may be open to more public access in the future.

On Nov. 6 and 9, the committee held meetings by invitation and word of mouth for potential partners in the park. Approximately fifteen people attended the first meeting and ten attended the second. At both meetings, ad hoc committee members shared their vision for the park site (see III. below) Most of these potential partners were intrigued with the idea of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park within the community and looked forward to getting more information from the NPS.

On November 13, the committee held an advertised public meeting in Fuller Lodge to discuss this vision for the park. Another fifteen people attended and added to the committee’s ideas.

Based on input from these meetings, the committee has refined its vision and proposes the following:

III. Park Vision

A. Centralized Park Headquarters: At a central Visitor Center, which would

include information and interpretation, a Park Ranger would greet visitors, tell them about the National Park and then direct them to other sites in the area where they would be able to see tangible historical sites and objects from the Manhattan Project (Ashley Pond, Lamy Train Station) as well as interpretation and information that is already taking place in the community (LA Historical Museum, Bradbury Science Museum).

B. Tours

a. Guided and Self-Guided: These would include ranger-guided walking tours through the downtown historic district and other sites; driving and walking audio tours; as well as guided tours that would show visitors accessible areas of LANL, historic downtown, the old Main Gate location, and other sites.

b. LANL: With approval and coordination of LANL and the Department of Energy officials, periodic “Behind the Fence Tours” to V-Site, Gun Site, and other restored Manhattan Project-era buildings, similar to the tours held at Trinity Site.

C. Partners

Potential partners in this project are those who own, maintain or have some other association (such as tourist services or items) with tangible historical objects or buildings from the Manhattan Project – something that will enhance visitors’ experiences and increase their understanding of this time in history. The lists below are not all-inclusive.

D. Potential Themes of Interpretation

1. People/Social History

a. Scientists and their families

b. Military

i. In Los Alamos (SEDs, MPs, etc.)

ii. In the Pacific, including POWs

c. Local Pueblo and Hispanic populations whose lives were affected and who were an essential part of the project (stet)

d. Local historical figures such as Edith Warner, Dorothy McKibbin, Evelyn Frey

e. Stories of people affected by the bombings, both American and Japanese

f. Responses to the bomb

2. Science

a. Bradbury Science Museum

3. Impacts

a. Science

b. Northern New Mexico

c. Military

d. International Relations

e. Cold War

f. Environmental/Health

g. Government

i. Civilian control of nuclear resources (AEC, DOE)

ii. The growth of government-run, multi-disciplinary science labs

4. Growth of the town of Los Alamos
5. What happened to people after the war?

E. Potential Visitor Sites

1. Local

- a. The Los Alamos Historical Museum
- b. The Bradbury Science Museum
- c. Oppenheimer House
- d. Ashley Pond
- e. Ice House Memorial
- f. Fuller Lodge
- g. Historic Walking Tour of Bathtub Row
- h. Periodic “Behind the Fence” Tours to V-Site, Gun Site, and other restored Manhattan-era buildings at LANL
- i. Unitarian Church (former dorm)
- j. Little Theater (former Rec Hall)
- k. Christian Science Church (former dorm)
- l. Hill Diner (WWII-era building)
- m. Main Hill Road/Main Gate area
- n. Last Sundt apartment building in Los Alamos (Dentist office on Trinity)
- o. Crossroads Bible Church (WW II-era Theater)

2. Nearby

- a. Bandelier National Monument
- b. Pajarito Mountain Ski Area
- c. Valles Caldera
- d. Otowi Bridge
- e. Sundt apartments in Espanola on Railroad Avenue

3. Santa Fe

- a. 109 E. Palace Ave.
- b. La Fonda
- c. Lamy Train Station
- d. Delgado Street Bridge and other spy-related sites

4. Albuquerque

- a. Oxnard Air Field (Kirtland AFB)
- b. National Atomic Museum

5. Future considerations

- a. Sculptures, outdoor art, and other monuments to the Manhattan Project era that are currently under consideration