

**Statement of
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Acting Assistant Director
National Landscape Conservation System & Community Partnerships
Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
H.R. 3565, California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act
May 12, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 3565, the California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act. The bill would add 5 new areas totaling approximately 5,880 acres to the California Coastal National Monument. The Department of the Interior supports H.R. 3565 and would also like to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to address certain technical issues in the bill.

Background

The California coast is rugged and spectacular, representing one of the nation's most iconic and treasured landscapes. Millions of visitors travel up and down the California coast each year, stopping at coastal towns and vista points to experience breathtaking views and spectacular scenery and to observe an abundance of wildlife along the coast. In 2000, Presidential Proclamation 7264 established the California Coastal National Monument, administered by the Bureau of Land Management and comprising over 20,000 islands, rocks, and pinnacles along the 1,100 mile California coast. In 2014, Presidential Proclamation 9089 added the Point Arena-Stornetta unit, which included 1,665 acres of public land along the coastline. This area provides a mainland base for access and interpretation and plays a critical role in enhancing the public's enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding of the California Coastal National Monument.

Since the expansion of the boundary, many California coastal communities have built grassroots networks, including businesses, environmental groups, members of the public, and other non-governmental organizations that support the protection of additional lands along the coast as a unit of the California Coastal National Monument. Trinidad Head, Lighthouse Ranch, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies Public Lands, Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, and the Orange County Rocks and Islands are valued by nearby Coastal communities for their scenic, conservation, and recreation values, and each of these areas contains nationally significant historical, cultural, natural, and scientific resources.

Trinidad Head is a 60-acre rocky promontory surrounded by sea stacks in the Trinidad Harbor. The large and dominant coastal head is bordered by sheer cliffs that are often battered by strong winter storms, and the area is culturally and spiritually significant to the Native American communities of the Yurok, Tsurai, and Trinidad Rancheria. Thirteen acres on Trinidad Head, including the historic Trinidad Head Lighthouse, are managed by the BLM and used for recreational activities. The BLM is working with community partners to develop a management plan for the area that will address public access, conservation, and recreation goals.

Lighthouse Ranch is 12 miles south of Eureka and overlooks the Eel River Delta, the Mike Thompson Wildlife Area, the South Spit of Humboldt Bay, and the Pacific Ocean, offering stunning views of the coastline. The eight-acre parcel administered by the BLM is managed for

conservation and recreation, including picnicking, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The BLM also manages the 600-acre Mike Thompson Wildlife Area under a conservation easement with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The Cotoni-Coast Dairies, located near Davenport in Santa Cruz County, represents one of the last areas in the coastal foothills that is available to the public. This area offers spectacular views of the ocean and several of the most iconic monument rocks and islands on the North Coast of Santa Cruz County. The Cotoni-Coast Dairies includes a diverse array of plants and wildlife. The landscape is a mosaic of majestic upland oak groves, mixed evergreen and redwood forests, native coastal prairie and exotic grasslands, upland scrubs, wetland communities, and riparian scrubs and forests. Native wildlife such as resident and migratory songbirds and raptors, mountain lions, badgers, and other species thrive within the region's vast network of conservation areas and open space preserves. The BLM manages 5,840 acres of public land in the area, which is home to rare fish and wildlife species such as the California red-legged frog, Coho salmon, and Central California Coast steelhead. The Cotoni-Coast Dairies area is also culturally and historically significant to many groups of Native American people. Today, these lands are managed for conservation of native coastal wildlife and habitats, grazing, and recreational public uses.

The Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area, located six miles from the historic Hearst Castle in San Luis Obispo County on State Scenic Highway One, includes 20 acres of public lands that are part of the BLM's National Conservation Lands. The Piedras Blancas Light Station, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, began operation in 1875 and is still used today to aid marine navigation. The Light Station is named for the distinctive white rocks that loom just offshore. These rocks, and the rugged shoreline, are home to seabirds, sea lions, and elephant seals. Over 70 native plant species can be found on the habitat surrounding the Light Station. In addition, the Light Station is also an important area for scientific studies of whales, seals, sea otters, seabirds, tide pools, and seismicity. The area provides excellent opportunities for visitors to enjoy wildlife observation, hiking, picnicking, nature study, tide-pool walks, and guided tours of the Light Station.

The Orange County Rocks and Islands consist of more than 40 offshore rocks, pinnacles, exposed reefs, and small islands, totaling less than two acres at the mean high tide level. These features are located within one mile of the Pacific coast of Orange County. In 1931, Congress reserved the Orange County Rocks and Islands for park, scenic, or other public purposes and in 1935, amended the reservation for lighthouse construction and navigation. Because of these legislative withdrawals, the rocks were not incorporated into the California Coastal National Monument. Nonetheless, the rocks contain unique geologic formations and provide some of the last remaining undisturbed offshore habitat in southern California for a wide variety of migratory and resident birds and marine mammals and a rich diversity of upper intertidal species. Because the U.S. Coast Guard no longer requires the use of these rocks and small islands for navigation purposes, local stakeholders propose to have the withdrawal removed and the rocks and islands incorporated into the California Coastal National Monument.

H.R. 3565, California Coastal National Monument Expansion Act

H.R. 3565 would expand the boundary of the California Coastal National Monument by an additional 5,880 acres of public lands located along the California coast, including Trinidad Head, Lighthouse Ranch, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies, and Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural

Area. The bill would also incorporate the Orange County Rocks and Islands into the Monument and remove the unused lighthouse reservation. The bill would authorize each of these areas to be managed in accordance with the two Presidential Proclamations that established and expanded the Monument.

Each National Monument and National Conservation Area designated by Congress and managed by the BLM is unique. However, all of these designations have certain critical elements in common, including withdrawal from the public land, mining, and mineral leasing laws; limiting off-highway vehicles to roads and trails designated for their use; and language that charges the Secretary of the Interior with allowing only those uses that further the purposes for which the area is established. The designations in H.R. 3565 are consistent with these principles, and we support their designation. The addition of new areas to the California Coastal National Monument will help strengthen and expand partnerships with California coastal communities and provide opportunities for stewardship of coastal resources, interpretation, environmental education, and other volunteer activities. In addition, visitors will experience and learn about the Monument and its natural and cultural resources. The proposed expansion of the Monument is consistent with the BLM's resource management goals and the purposes of the Proclamations.

Under the bill, the Secretary, through the BLM, will be required to develop or amend the Resource Management Plan (RMP) for areas to be added to the Monument. Specifically, the bill requires that the BLM develop an RMP "for the long-term protection and management of the Federal land added to the Monument" as well as to address visitation and recreation by the public, along with other permitted and public uses. The bill further provides for continuation or development of cooperative agreements with state and local governments, tribes, environmental groups, and stewardship organizations. The BLM values and appreciates working closely with partners and looks forward to continuing to work with local government agencies and organizations on the management of these important areas.

The bill will provide protection of Native American sacred sites, as well as manage access for traditional customary uses. The Monument additions will also provide for the establishment of an advisory council or the use of existing advisory bodies for each unit to provide input for development of RMP amendments. The BLM recognizes the importance of fostering positive working relationships with adjacent private landowners and other stakeholders, and we welcome the opportunity to work together with all stakeholders to effectively manage the additions to the California Coastal National Monument.

The BLM would like to work with the sponsor to address a few technical issues related to grazing in the Monument, the management plan, ensuring that the existing cooperative agreement for the Piedras Blancas Outstanding Natural Area is maintained, and regarding the coordination with advisory councils.

Conclusion

The Department of the Interior appreciates Representative Capps' work with local communities to develop H.R. 3565. We support the bill and look forward to working with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to address certain technical issues and to accomplish our shared goals for conserving, protecting, and restoring the unique resources of the California coastline. I would be happy to answer any questions.

**Statement of
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Bureau of Land Management
Department of the Interior
House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
H.R. 3839, Black Hills National Cemetery Boundary Expansion Act
May 12, 2016**

Thank you for inviting the Department of the Interior to testify on H.R. 3839, the Black Hills National Cemetery Boundary Expansion Act, which transfers administrative jurisdiction of approximately 200 acres of public land currently managed by the Department's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) for inclusion in the Black Hills National Cemetery in Meade County, South Dakota. The Department of the Interior supports H.R. 3839.

Background

The Black Hills National Cemetery is located three miles southeast of Sturgis, South Dakota, near the Black Hills. Established in 1948, the cemetery currently encompasses 106 acres and has had over 20,000 interments. The BLM understands that the NCA would use the additional land provided under H.R. 3839 to expand the Black Hills National Cemetery to provide burial space for future needs. The BLM and the NCA have discussed such a transfer for several years, but the BLM has determined that no general authority exists for the agency to grant a perpetual transfer of jurisdiction as required by the NCA for a cemetery.

H.R. 3839

H.R. 3839 directs the Secretary of the Interior to transfer administrative jurisdiction of approximately 200 acres of public land to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to be incorporated into the existing Black Hills National Cemetery, subject to valid existing rights. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs would be required to pay all survey costs and other reasonable costs associated with the transfer. The Federal land to be transferred would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the public land laws, including the mining, mineral leasing, and geothermal leasing laws. Under the bill, should the NCA ever determine that it no longer needs any portion of the additional land, the Secretary of the Interior could restore the unneeded land to the public domain. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs would be responsible for costs of any decontamination necessary for restoration to public land status.

The Department of the Interior supports H.R. 3839 and the transfer of administrative jurisdiction. We note that the expansion area is currently part of the Fort Meade Recreation Area / Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and that the Centennial Trail runs along the northern boundary of the expansion area. We suggest adding bill language to provide a 100-foot setback boundary from the centerline of the trail. The Administration would also like to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to clarify the provisions related to decontamination and restoration of the land to public land status.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of H.R. 3839, the Black Hills National Cemetery Boundary Expansion Act. We appreciate the work of the South Dakota congressional delegation on this legislation, and we look forward to collaborating with them and the Subcommittee to meet the needs of the Black Hills National Cemetery.

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House Natural Resources Committee
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H.R. 4233, Incorporating Rocks and Small Islands into the California Coastal National
Monument
May 12, 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 4233, which would incorporate rocks and small islands along the coast of Orange County, California into the California Coastal National Monument and remove an unused lighthouse reservation. The Department of the Interior supports the conservation goals of H.R. 4233 and would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee to address some concerns with the bill's management language discussed in more detail below.

Background

The California coast is rugged and spectacular, representing one of the nation's most iconic and treasured landscapes. Millions of visitors travel up and down the California coast each year, stopping at coastal towns and vista points to experience breathtaking views and spectacular scenery and to observe an abundance of wildlife along the coast. In 2000, Presidential Proclamation 7264 established the California Coastal National Monument, administered by the Bureau of Land Management and comprising over 20,000 islands, rocks, and pinnacles along the 1,100 mile California coast. In 2014, Presidential Proclamation 9089 added the Point Arena-Stornetta unit, which included 1,665 acres of public land along the coastline. This area provides a mainland base for access and interpretation and plays a critical role in enhancing the public's enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding of the California Coastal National Monument.

The Orange County Rocks and Islands consist of more than 40 offshore rocks, pinnacles, exposed reefs, and small islands, totaling less than two acres at the mean high tide level. These features are located within one mile of the Pacific coast of Orange County. These offshore rocks and small islands are valued by nearby Coastal communities for their scenic, conservation and recreation values and contain nationally significant historical, cultural, natural, and scientific resources.

In 1931, Congress reserved the Orange County Rocks and Islands for park, scenic, or other public purposes and in 1935, amended the reservation for lighthouse construction and navigation. Because of these legislative withdrawals, the rocks were not incorporated into the California Coastal National Monument. Nonetheless, the rocks contain unique geologic formations and provide some of the last remaining undisturbed offshore habitat in southern California for a wide variety of migratory and resident birds and marine mammals and a rich diversity of upper intertidal species. Because the U.S. Coast Guard no longer requires the use of these rocks and small islands for navigation purposes, local stakeholders propose to have the withdrawal removed and the rocks and islands incorporated into the California Coastal National Monument.

H.R. 4233

H.R. 4233 would incorporate the Orange County Rocks and Islands into the California Coastal National Monument and remove the unused lighthouse reservation. The bill would also require that the Secretary of the Interior allow for the continuation of any existing authorized economic and recreational uses on the rocks and islands.

The BLM supports the incorporation of the Orange County Rocks and Islands into the California Coastal National Monument and the removal of the lighthouse reservation. At this time, we are not aware of any currently authorized uses that would be impacted by inclusion of this area into the Monument. We believe that the new language regarding the continuation of existing economic and recreational uses sets a bad precedent and could limit the agency's ability to conserve, protect, and restore the resources and values for which the Monument was designated. We are concerned that this language could unintentionally prevent future management changes that may be needed. The BLM recognizes the importance of economic and recreational opportunities on public lands and will continue to foster good working relationships with interested stakeholders as an essential management component of the Monument.

Each National Monument and National Conservation Area designated by Congress and managed by the BLM is unique. However, all of these designations have certain critical elements in common, including withdrawal from the public land, mining, and mineral leasing laws; limiting off-highway vehicles to roads and trails designated for their use; and language that charges the Secretary of the Interior with allowing only those uses that further the purposes for which the area is established. Based on consistent public support and careful consideration of the area's resource values, the BLM believes that the significance of the scenic, conservation, and recreation values of the Orange County Rocks and Islands merits their inclusion in the National Conservation Lands. As we have previously testified, the BLM believes that these rocks and islands could be managed under the key principles of the National Conservation Lands in a way that protects the area's significant resources and allows for economic and recreational use.

We would like the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee on language ensuring that, if H.R. 4233 is approved, the BLM would be able to manage the Orange County Rocks and Islands in a manner consistent with the rest of the Monument, as designated.

Conclusion

The Department of the Interior appreciates Representative Rohrabacher's work with local communities to develop this legislation. We support the conservation goals of the bill and look forward to working with the sponsor, the Subcommittee, and stakeholders to address the specific concerns noted in our testimony and to accomplish our shared stewardship goals for conserving, protecting, and restoring the unique resources of the California coastline. I would be happy to answer your questions.

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H.R. 5132, Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act
May 12, 2016

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 5132, the Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act. The bill modifies the eastern boundary of the Deschutes Canyon-Steelhead Falls Wilderness Study Area (WSA) in Jefferson County, Oregon, and releases approximately 832 acres from WSA management. The Department of the Interior recognizes the significant work of various stakeholders to attempt to reach a consensus on the future management of public lands in this area, particularly with respect to balancing the protection of unique resources within the WSA with actions to address wildland fire risk for nearby communities. While we share the sponsor's interest in hazardous fuels reduction and preventing wildfires that may impact the communities surrounding this WSA, we have technical concerns with the legislation as described below.

The Department notes that this bill was introduced fewer than two weeks ago, and we have not had sufficient time to undertake the thorough review that is appropriate for a hearing on this matter. Based on an initial analysis of the bill and its accompanying legislative map, the exact lands proposed for release from WSA management are unclear, as well as the extent to which the proposal meets the objectives of interested stakeholders. We would welcome the opportunity, in cooperation with the sponsor, to create a legislative map for the purposes of this bill that reflects land status data and delineates the proposed boundary more clearly. We would like to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to address a few technical and minor concerns with the bill, and we look forward to continuing to work with local stakeholders to resolve land management issues within and surrounding the WSA.

Background

The Deschutes Canyon-Steelhead Falls WSA was part of the original intensive wilderness inventory conducted in 1978 by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Oregon. This WSA is a long narrow area located along the upper Deschutes River, within and adjacent to the Forest Service-administered Crooked River National Grasslands, and consists of approximately 10,230 acres of forest lands managed by the Forest Service and approximately 3,240 acres of public land managed by the BLM. The area is surrounded by the Crooked River Ranch (a private subdivision) to the east, Lake Billy Chinook to the north, low-density rural populations to the south, and farmlands to the west. The portions of the Deschutes River within this WSA have been protected under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act since 1988.

Within the WSA, the beauty and wildness of the Deschutes River canyon increases with the change in elevation as one proceeds north toward Lake Billy Chinook. Once within the Deschutes or Squaw Creek canyons, one's attention shifts from the roar and rapid movement of the water, to the vibrant green and red hues of riparian vegetation along the river bank and also to the scenic canyon walls towering above this river environment. These multicolored walls

leave the visitor with a lasting impression that these formations were bisected by the Deschutes River over several thousand years.

H.R. 5132, the Crooked River Ranch Fire Protection Act

H.R. 5132 requires the Secretary of the Interior to reduce the size of the Deschutes Canyon-Steelhead Falls WSA by approximately 832 acres to “facilitate fire prevention and response activities to protect adjacent private property, and for other purposes.” By releasing these 832 acres from WSA status, this area would be managed by the BLM for the full range of non-wilderness multiple uses under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).

The BLM notes that under FLPMA, the Wilderness Act, and agency policy, mechanical vegetation treatments, including pre-fire treatments, are allowed in WSAs as long as they meet the non-impairment standard or its emergency or restoration exceptions. The BLM shares the sponsor’s goal of reducing fire threats that may impact the life and safety of people and private property near the WSA. The BLM also recognizes the significant work of a broad section of stakeholders to reach a consensus on the future management of public lands in this area, particularly with respect to balancing the protection of unique resources within the WSA with actions to address wildland fire risk.

Based on an initial review of the bill and the legislative map, the proposed boundary is not clearly delineated and we are unsure exactly which lands the sponsor intends to release from WSA management. It is also unclear whether the boundary modification would affect parts of this area currently managed by the Forest Service. We would welcome the opportunity to create a legislative map for the purposes of this bill that reflects land status data and more clearly identifies which lands would be released from WSA management. Finally, we would like the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Subcommittee to address a number of minor and technical concerns with the bill, including the mechanics of the WSA release and possible further boundary adjustments to enhance manageability and ensure the continued protection of Steelhead Falls.

Conclusion

The Department of the Interior looks forward to working with the sponsor, the Subcommittee, and stakeholders on public land management issues raised in this legislation and to address the specific concerns noted in our testimony. I would be happy to answer your questions.