

Testimony of Mayor John Lee,  
City of North Las Vegas, Nevada  
before the  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation  
regarding  
H.R. 2015, the Las Vegas Valley Public Land and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument  
Act of 2013

October 3, 2013

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva, and members of the committee, my name is John Lee, and I am the Mayor of the City of North Las Vegas. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of H.R. 2015, the Las Vegas Valley Public Land and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Act of 2013.

The legislation before us today enjoys the bipartisan support of the entire Nevada congressional delegation. I would like to thank Rep. Steven Horsford, my congressman and former colleague in the Nevada Legislature, for his leadership on this legislation. I would also like to thank Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senator Dean Heller for all of their hard work in crafting what I believe to be the most significant public land legislation for Southern Nevada in over a decade.

H.R. 2015 designates over 22,000 acres of federal land in the northern part of the Las Vegas Valley as a national monument. A significant portion of this acreage lies within the City of North Las Vegas. The City has worked closely for the past several years with Clark County, the City of Las Vegas, Nellis Air Force Base, NV Energy, local conservation groups, and the

business community to develop a consensus boundary for the monument that balances our desire for resource protection with our future plans for economic development.

H.R. 2015 not only establishes a unique urban national monument, the bill creates opportunities for job creation and economic development. As policy makers, I am sure you hear these buzz words in almost every hearing; however, H.R. 2015 provides critical economic development opportunities for our City. The bill includes over 1,300 acres set aside for job creation zones to be used by the City of North Las Vegas and Las Vegas.

Additionally, the urban national monument established by H.R. 2015 will provide a tremendous benefit to the tourist dependent region. Our national parks attract over 350 million domestic and international visitors each year. We believe this new monument will appeal to a percentage of the 40 million-plus visitors Southern Nevada hosts each year, in addition to attracting new visitors to our region. Our financially struggling community could benefit from the fact that national park units typically generate at least ten dollars for nearby gateway communities for every dollar invested. North Las Vegas has struggled financially, one of our zip codes is nationally ranked as one of the top 10 for worst rates of home foreclosures, and as the new Mayor of North Las Vegas, I believe H.R. 2015 is a gigantic step in the right direction towards our regions economic recovery.

I believe the establishment of the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument will serve the dual purpose of protecting nationally significant paleontological resources and promoting economic development and tourism in North Las Vegas. North Las Vegas is a

diverse minority-majority city largely comprised of a vibrant Hispanic community, and the monument will provide a place for our school children to visit and learn first hand about our Nations and Nevada's natural history. The location of the monument on the boarder of a large Hispanic community provides one possible solution to the National Park Service's widely publicized efforts attract more minorities. The Service's commissioned reports found only 1 in 10 of its visitors are Hispanic- the nation's fastest-growing demographic group. H.R. 2015 establishes a urban national monument that can act as a gateway for attracting nontraditional visitors into our national parks.

While the national monument is clearly the focal point of H.R. 2015, there are several other provisions of this legislation as important to the future growth and development of the City of North Las Vegas. Section 4 of the bill conveys 645 acres of BLM land to the City for economic development purposes. The land is adjacent to the proposed UNLV North Campus, and the conveyance would allow the City to master plan and develop this area to provide ancillary services that support the mission of the new campus. Section 8 of the bill expands the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act disposal boundary for BLM-managed lands in North Las Vegas. The City intends to nominate these parcels for sale for industrial development at a future BLM auction. and thereby increase our local tax base by converting federal land into private ownership. We anticipate that hundreds of jobs will be created as a result of this industrial development.

North Las Vegas is the home of Nellis Air Force Base, and the City is proud to be the home of many airmen and civilians who work on the base. The City has gone to great lengths to

work with Nellis to develop joint land use plans that allow for responsible development by the City while protecting the base from encroachment that could threaten its training mission. The City supports the provisions in the bill addressing military overflights and the transfer of BLM land to the Air Force to protect the important mission of Nellis.

H.R. 2015 also creates economic opportunities by establishing the Nellis Dunes Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area for outdoor enthusiasts. The City supports Clark County's effort to establish the Nellis Dunes Area on BLM land on the northeast side of the Las Vegas Valley. Our community is in desperate need of a dedicated area for this type of recreational activity. Since the City would be responsible for providing certain utility services to this area, we are pleased that the legislation provides for a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and Clark County before any economic development may occur near the recreation area.

Mr. Chairman, like many communities, the City of North Las Vegas has had its share of challenges over the past four years. As we focus on the future, I believe the establishment of the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument will bring tremendous benefits to North Las Vegas. H.R. 2015 is a critical piece of legislation that will protect an area that is currently subject to vandalism and unauthorized off-road vehicle use. It will provide a new destination for visitors to Southern Nevada, and it will provide North Las Vegas residents with the sense of pride shared by all communities that are fortunate enough to have the National Park Service as a neighbor.

I urge your support for this important legislation, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

**John Jay Lee**  
Mayor-Elect



*Your Community of Choice*

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June 6, 2013

The Honorable Harry Reid  
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joe Heck  
132 Cannon HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Dean Heller  
324 Hart Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steven Horsford  
1330 Longworth HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mark Amodei  
222 Cannon HOB  
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable Dina Titus  
401 Cannon HOB  
Washington DC, 20515

Re: S. 974 and H.R. 2015 – The Las Vegas Valley Public Land and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Act of 2013.

Dear Sen. Reid, Sen. Heller, Rep. Heck, Rep. Amodei, Rep. Titus, and Rep. Horsford:

I am writing to strongly urge you to support S. 974 and H.R. 2015- The Las Vegas Valley Public Land and Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Act of 2013. As Mayor-Elect of North Las Vegas, I believe the National Monument is not only culturally and historically significant, but has the potential to provide a positive economic affect on our city.

The broad and overwhelming community support for the Tule Springs legislation matches the bi-partisan effort of the entire Nevada Congressional delegation. While on the campaign trail over the last several months, a countless number of people expressed their support and excitement for Tule Springs. Nevadans are excited and eager for the wonderful addition of the monument to our state.

I hope you will continue your work to quickly pass the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument Act. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully

John Lee  
Mayor-Elect, North Las Vegas

Breaking News: 12 dead in Navy Yard shooting; suspect ID'ed as Texas man

**Recreation:**

# National parks trying to attract more minorities

**Kirk Johnson, New York Times News Service**

Saturday, Sept. 14, 2013 | 2 a.m.

LA PUSH, Wash. — Thrusting out into the Pacific Ocean, Olympic National Park can feel like a lost world, with its verdant forests, violent surf and cloud-shrouded peaks.

But to the four women who hiked down to the sand one recent afternoon, there was an added element of strangeness: race.

“We’ve been here for two days, walking around, and I can’t think of any brown person that I’ve seen,” said Carol Cain, 42, a New Jersey resident of Dominican and Puerto Rican roots, who was zipped up tight in her hooded, dripping rain jacket.

The National Park Service knows all too well what Cain is talking about. In a soul-searching, head-scratching journey of its own, the agency that manages some of the most awe-inspiring public places is scrambling to rethink and redefine itself to the growing number of Americans who do not use the parks in the way previous — mostly white — generations did.

Only about 1 in 5 visitors to a national park site is nonwhite, according to a 2011 University of Wyoming report commissioned by the Park Service, and only about 1 in 10 is Hispanic — a particularly lackluster embrace by the nation’s fastest-growing demographic group.

One way the service has been fighting to break through is with a program called American Latino Expeditions, which invited Cain and her three colleagues. Groups like theirs went to three parks and recreation areas this summer — participants competed for the spots, with expenses paid for mostly through corporate donations — part of a multipronged effort to turn the Park Service’s demographic battleship around.

“We know that if we get them there, it can be transformative,” Jonathan Jarvis, the Park Service’s director, said. A single positive park visit, he said, can create a lifelong pattern.

Easy to say, harder to achieve, Jarvis admitted. But the agency, in looking for a path forward, has also stumbled onto an unlikely team of allies — from outdoor outfitters to health and fitness advocates — all focused on the same thing: encouraging, supplying or simply understanding the young minority market.

GirlTrek, a national nonprofit group, organizes fitness-oriented park hikes for blacks. REI, the big recreation retailer, and Aramark, which manages lodging in some national parks, are sponsoring expeditions through the American Latino Heritage Fund, a unit of the National Park Foundation, a congressionally chartered nonprofit group. New recruiting efforts to diversify the Park Service’s employee base — also largely white — are working with urban youths who might scoff at the idea of being a ranger in the wild, but could gravitate toward history, science or construction jobs.

New attractions are part of the mix, too. National monuments, managed by the Park Service, have been

created in the past few years to recognize more minority figures in American history, like Cesar Chavez, the farm labor organizer, and Harriet Tubman of Underground Railroad fame.

“The future is diverse,” said Scott Welch, a spokesman for Columbia Sportswear, which provided clothing to expedition groups this summer and has been working with GirlTrek. “If you want to be a brand for the future, you’ve got to embrace that.”

But the effort to diversify also touches some deep cultural grooves in American life that may not be as quick to change as a moisture-wicking outdoor shirt.

Many white Americans who grew up going to the parks had towering figures of outdoor history — not to mention family tradition — blazing the trail as examples. And those examples, like Daniel Boone and the fur trappers of the Old West, tended to be white.

The idea of roughing it in a tent, however, can feel to some people like going backward, said Cain, a first-generation American who said the stories in her family about escaping the hard rural life still resonate.

Chelle Roberts, 40, who was on the Olympic Park expedition with her sister, Crystal, 33, co-authors of the blog *BrownGirlsFly*, said there was also simply more of an appetite for vacations in cushy surroundings. “People want a lot of things we associate with modern luxury,” she said.

The Park Service has allied with private interests before, in survival or strategy. At the agency’s founding in 1916, the idea of having national parks at all was new and had to be introduced and sold. Art was a tool then, with majestic landscape works by Albert Bierstadt and other painters widely reproduced in pushing the notion that natural majesty was of value.

In the 1950s and ’60s, the automobile industry became a partner, when the Park Service went after World War II veterans, who were furiously raising baby boom families. Advertising campaigns of the time, like “See the USA in Your Chevrolet,” linked the call of the open road to the appeal of outdoor adventure.

But the new effort goes further, to the question of how, and how much, the parks themselves must change to attract a fundamentally different audience. Wireless access, for example — still nonexistent in much of the Park Service universe — could divide older park visitors from minorities and young people who want to share the experience live in social media.

“Boomers maybe want to get away, and millennials want to be connected; that changes how you use the space,” said Laura Swapp, REI’s director of diversity and inclusion. Music events could be another generational dividing line — peace and quiet versus entertainment — but would also draw the demographic the Park Service is after, Swapp said.

But the reality that going to a park means encountering mostly white people is, at least for now, its own potential barrier. Research by the Park Service says some members of minority groups have said they fear they would feel unwelcome.

Cain said she intended to write about that sense of isolation in her blog, *GirlGoneTravel*. “You’re going to notice it,” she said. “Don’t let it be distracting.”