

Subcommittee on Federal Lands

Tom McClintock, Chairman
Hearing Memorandum

November 13, 2017

To: All Subcommittee on Federal Lands Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Terry Camp
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x 6-7736)

Hearing: **Legislative hearing on H.R. 2888 (Rep. Jason Smith of MO),** To establish the Ste. Genevieve National Historic Site in the State of Missouri, and for other purposes.
November 15, 2017 at 10:30 a.m.; 1334 Longworth HOB.

H.R. 2888 (Rep. Smith), “Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park Establishment Act”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 2888, introduced by Representative Jason Smith (R-MO-8), would establish the Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park in the city of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri as a unit of the National Park System and authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire land for the Historical Park by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange.

Witnesses

Panel I

U.S. Representative Jason Smith
Member of Congress

Panel II

Ms. Sue Masica
Acting Deputy Director for Operations
National Park Service
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Paul Hassler
Mayor
Ste. Genevieve, MO

Background

Ste. Genevieve was founded circa 1750 by French Canadian settlers, most of whom came from earlier settlements just across the Mississippi in present-day Illinois. Though resources such as salt and lead attracted settlers to the west side of the Mississippi, the rich soil was the greatest draw. Ste. Genevieve was primarily an agricultural settlement, with free and enslaved residents working in the Grand Champ, or Common Field, a large area of privately held, long agricultural lots surrounded by one large fence.¹

After a series of floods, the most severe of which occurred in 1785, the town was moved inland approximately three miles, to where it exists today. Residents continued to work the Common Field, which though smaller, is still cultivated today. Ste. Genevieve became a hub of trade, and following the Revolutionary War there was an influx of British Americans that intensified following the Louisiana Purchase, expanding the village. Ste. Genevieve retains many of its historic buildings, landscapes, and community characteristics.²

Ste. Genevieve is one of the oldest National Historic Landmark districts in the country. When a portion of the district was initially designated as such in 1960, it was recognized for the unique concentration of French vertical log architecture--the largest extant collection of this architecture in North America. The most notable feature of French vernacular log architecture is the use of logs vertically, rather than horizontally, as seen in buildings in the frontier settlements of people of other ethnic European extractions. With new research and an expanded understanding of French settlement in the mid-Mississippi 'Illinois Country,' new resources have been identified and the nationally significant district encompasses much of the City of Ste. Genevieve and agricultural landscapes and archeological sites in Ste. Genevieve County.³

In 2009, Congress, through Public Law 109-319, authorized the Ste. Genevieve Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment. The study concluded that the Ste. Genevieve district is nationally significant and suitable, and that certain resources within the district are feasible and have a need for direct National Park Service (NPS) management. The proposed historic site includes a mix of privately and publicly-owned parcels. The State of Missouri owns many of those properties and could transfer them to NPS ownership by donation. Private properties may be acquired over time through donation or purchase from willing sellers as funding allows.

The special resource study estimated the annual cost to operate the site would be \$800,000 to \$1.2 million per year, which is comparable to other national historic sites and parks. This operational budget would primarily fund a NPS staff of 6-12 Full Time Equivalents, for interpretive and educational programs, and outreach. The additional facilities and properties will increase park operational and maintenance costs, but the amount will depend on the number of facilities acquired and their condition. Additional funds for maintenance, repairs and capital

¹ National Park Service. Ste. Genevieve Final Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment. 2016. 3. Accessed November 9, 2017. <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?projectID=31496>.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Ibid., i.

improvements would be awarded through the NPS competitive process, subject to service-wide priorities and the availability of appropriations.

There is widespread support for the establishment of the Historical Park. Supporting organizations include:

City of Ste. Genevieve
County Commission of Ste. Genevieve
Foundation for the Restoration of Ste. Genevieve
Les Amis
The Missouri Parks Association
National Society Colonial Dames of America in the State of Missouri
New Bourbon Regional Port Authority
Sierra Club (Eastern Missouri Group)
State Historical Society of Missouri
Ste. Genevieve Chamber of Commerce
Ste. Genevieve Downtown Renewal Project
Ste. Genevieve Museum
Ste. Genevieve Tourism Tax Commission.

U.S. Senator Roy Blunt (R-MO) has introduced a Senate companion as S. 1335.

Major Provisions

- Establishes the Ste. Genevieve National Historical Park as a unit of the National Park System
- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to acquire lands located within the boundary of the Historical Park or any nationally significant property identified in the special resource within the Historic District by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange.
- Requires the Secretary of the Interior to revise the boundaries of the Historical Park whenever properties within the Historic District are acquired.
- Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to provide technical assistance and enter into cooperative agreements with the owner of a nationally significant property within the Historical Park or the Historic District, to identify, mark, interpret, improve, and restore the property.

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill. However, CBO provided a cost estimate for a similar bill, S. 2954, in the 114th Congress. The CBO cost estimate for S. 2954 can be found [here](https://www.cbo.gov/publication/52157).⁴

⁴ <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/52157>

Administration Position

The Administration position is unknown at this time.

Effect on Current Law

None.