

Statement by the Honorable Doug Lamborn
Legislative Hearing – H.R. 835
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
February 6, 2018

511 words

Thank you Chairman McClintock and Ranking Member Hanabusa for holding this hearing and for allowing me to testify on H.R. 835 to allow for the modification of the maximum acreage available for inclusion in the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, which is located entirely within my Congressional District.

I am pleased to have introduced this bipartisan legislation with my fellow Coloradoans Scott Tipton and Jared Polis in the House and Cory Gardner and Michael Bennet in the Senate.

Specifically, H.R. 835 would increase the current 6,000 acres to 6,300 acres and allow the National Park Service to accept the donation of 280 acres currently being held by the Palmer Land Trust and Coalition for the Upper South Platte into the Monument's boundaries.

The Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument was designated by Congress in 1969 to preserve and study one of the most diverse

fossil deposits in the world and to interpret its geologic significance. Located in a high mountain valley just West of Pikes Peak and 35 miles west of Colorado Springs, Colorado, the Monument features detailed fossils of insects, plants, and giant petrified redwood stumps that teach visitors about prehistoric Colorado. The park also maintains a collection of over 12,000 fossil specimens, conducts inventory and monitoring of the fossil sites, has ongoing collaborations and continues to be the subject of scientific publications.

The Monument also offers a variety of recreational experiences, including sightseeing, stargazing, interpretive visitor center exhibits, hiking, picnicking, daily ranger-guided programs during the summer, Junior Ranger programs, and curriculum-based education programs for visiting school groups. It is truly one of the crown jewels of the National Park Service.

In 2016, the National Park Service received a proposal from an adjacent private landowner to acquire an additional 280 acres via donation along Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument's northwestern boundary. If incorporated in the Monument, this 280-acre parcel of land will provide critical access to the park's western boundary for wildfire protection and opportunities for completing

future hazardous fuel mitigation projects, while also providing additional wildlife habitat. In addition, the donated acreage could provide visitors with more recreational opportunities including hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and wildlife watching, all with no supplemental funding or staff needed.

However, the National Park Service is unable to accept the 280-acre donation because when Congress created the monument in 1969, it placed a legislative ceiling of 6,000 acres and the current acreage is 5,992 acres. My legislation seeks to only increase the Monument's size to allow the National Park Service the ability to accept this critical donation.

The proposed monument boundary expansion has received unanimous local support from all stakeholders including: The Friends of the Florissant Fossil Beds, Sanborn Western Camps, Teller Historic and Environment Coalition, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Palmer Land Trust, Coalition for the Upper South Platte, the Pikes Peak Historical Society, and the Teller County Board of Commissioners.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing and I yield back the balance of my time.