

**Chair Haaland**  
**Opening Statement**  
**NPFPL Leg Hrg**  
**July 13, 2020**

- Thank you all for attending today's Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands' legislative hearing on eight National Park Service bills.
- I would like to start by thanking the sponsoring Members of Congress as well as our witnesses for joining us today to speak about the local and national importance of these proposals.
- The bills before us today aim to provide important updates and modifications to existing units of the National Park System that will enhance protections and recreational access at various national park units across the country.
- Whether it's a bill to modify the boundary of an existing unit or simply to change a name, these proposals all seek to enhance the management of our public lands, promote increased visitation, and provide for the appropriate recognition of these important sites.
- H.R. 4345, introduced by Representative Elaine Luria, for example, would unify two currently divided sections of the Fort Monroe National Monument in Virginia.
- Fort Monroe is where the first slave ships landed in the English colonies and, 250 years later, was a safe haven for escaped slaves during the American Civil War.

- This bill will create an unbroken and federally managed coastline across the Chesapeake Bay, permanently protecting this site of immense historical significance.
- As our nation continues to reckon with America's legacy of racism, it is critical that Fort Monroe's rich history is preserved for future generations.
- I applaud Representative Luria for introducing this important legislation and for her efforts to ensure that our public lands tell a more complete and inclusive American story.
- Next, we will consider a proposal by Representative Tom O'Halleran that would roughly double the size of the Casa Grande Ruins National Monument – the largest protected Hohokam site and the only unit of the National Park Service that protects and interprets Hohokam culture.
- By expanding the boundaries of Casa Grande Ruins to include historic Hohokam farming land and the townsite of Adamsville, H.R. 4840 would provide a more comprehensive understanding of our shared past and ensure that the region's rich archaeological resources are preserved for future generations.
- We will also consider two proposals introduced by my friend and fellow Subcommittee Member, Representative Joe Neguse, designed to clear up some longstanding ownership issues and enhance recreational opportunities at Rocky Mountain National Park.

- Continuing with the theme of boundary revisions, H.R. 7098, introduced by full Committee Chair Raúl Grijalva, would expand the boundaries of Arizona's Saguaro National Park – enhancing habitat connectivity and recreational opportunities in the region.
- In addition to providing increased protections for the area's unique Sonoran Desert habitats, Chair Grijalva's proposal also seeks to ensure the continued protection of the region by authorizing a study on additional lands that should be considered as part of future boundary additions.
- Then we have two proposals, introduced by Representative Sanford Bishop and Representative James Himes, to redesignate the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site and Preservation District in Georgia and the Weir Farm National Historic Site in Connecticut as national historical parks.
- Finally, we will consider a proposal by Representative Rob Wittman to facilitate the maintenance and repair of Long Bridge Potomac River railroad crossing – one of the most significant chokepoints for the East Coast's rail transportation system.
- While the proposals before us are diverse in nature and geography, they are all united in their efforts to enhance our public lands and provide increased economic opportunities.
- Thank you again to the sponsoring Members and witnesses for being here today.
- I look forward to hearing your testimonies.