

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL T. REYNOLDS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR CONGRESSIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, REGARDING H.R. 3107, TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO ESTABLISH THE FEDERAL INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON OUTDOOR RECREATION.

September 19, 2023

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 3107, to direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation.

The Department supports H.R. 3107 with amendments. The Department defers to the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Army, and the Department of Commerce regarding their views on this bill's provisions, particularly as they affect the U.S. Forest Service, the Corps of Engineers, and the National Marine Fisheries Service, respectively.

H.R. 3107 would require the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation (FICOR), composed of the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Marine Fisheries Service. The bill would require FICOR to meet as frequently as appropriate to coordinate recreation policies across Federal agencies, including implementation of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act and many other matters that are common to agencies that manage Federal lands and waters for recreational purposes. The legislation would provide a statutory basis for FICOR, which is currently administratively established.

Our Nation's public lands, waters, and the fish and wildlife they support are an important resource for the American public. These places provide a diversity of outdoor recreation experiences for tens of millions of Americans each day and improve the social well-being of urban and rural communities across the United States. These recreational opportunities are supported by agency work both on and off federal lands. Outdoor recreation also contributes significantly to the national economy and the economies of local communities.

Federal land and water management agencies have longstanding responsibilities for the conservation and sustainable use of the resources within the places they manage. The need for interagency coordination of Federal departments and agencies with the responsibility to manage lands and waterways for outdoor recreation has a history dating back to at least 1946 with the development of the Federal Recreation Committee, which was soon after redesignated as the Federal Inter-Agency Committee on Recreation. Since then, there have been several iterations of this organized coordination, including the most recent Federal Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation reestablishment in July 2022 through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) signed by the Secretaries or Assistant Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Army (Civil Works), the Department of Commerce (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration), and the Department of the Interior. Collectively, these agencies manage an area of more than 730 million non-overlapping acres that consist of parks, lakes, monuments, wild and scenic rivers, Reclamation water projects, wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries, forests, and marine sanctuaries and wilderness areas.

The overall goal of the FICOR, as defined in the recent MOU, is to institutionalize and facilitate better coordination and collaboration among Federal agencies whose missions or programs include providing outdoor recreation and conserving or sustainably managing natural and cultural resources. FICOR provides a framework to address common outdoor recreation-related challenges and opportunities since each of these land and water management agencies are also facing similar challenges related to balancing resource protection, local environmental and economic vitality, and visitor use and enjoyment.

Many of these agencies have also recently benefitted from significant Federal investments to address critical needs and improve the visitor and outdoor recreation experiences provided through the Great American Outdoors Act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and the Inflation Reduction Act.

Since FICOR's 2022 reestablishment, the agencies have collectively developed an Operational Charter and a two-year workplan focusing coordination on priority topics which include permitting and fees, policy and regulations, equitable workforce, outdoor recreation for all, intergovernmental and community collaboration, partnerships, youth engagement, data and technology, and visitor use planning. The workplan also includes coordination to ensure the long-term sustainability of FICOR through identifying funding and establishing a well-vetted organizational structure.

The Department would appreciate the opportunity to work with the sponsor and the Committee on amendments to make the bill consistent, to the extent possible, with the July 2022 interagency MOU, including the areas identified for coordination. We would also recommend language that assures long-term sustainability for funding and capacity, as well as a federal family approach not driven by any one agency but rather managed equally between Departments. DOI also recommends that all the land and water management agencies currently participating in FICOR be included in the proposed legislation, including by acknowledging that the definitions referenced in the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act do not apply to all the agencies currently participating and referenced in the FICOR MOU.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL T. REYNOLDS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
CONGRESSIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, NATIONAL PARK
SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE
NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS
CONCERNING H.R. 3200, TO REQUIRE THE SECRETARY OF
AGRICULTURE AND THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CARRY OUT
CERTAIN ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
FOR GATEWAY COMMUNITIES, TO AMEND THE FEDERAL LANDS
RECREATION ENHANCEMENT ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A DIGITAL NATIONAL PARKS AND FEDERAL
RECREATIONAL LANDS PASS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

September 19, 2023

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 3200, to require the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to carry out certain activities to enhance recreational opportunities for gateway communities, to amend the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act to provide for the establishment of a digital National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, and for other purposes.

The Department supports the intent of H.R. 3200, but would like to work with the sponsor and the Committee on certain provisions of the bill. The Department defers to the Department of Agriculture for its views regarding provisions that affect the U.S. Forest Service.

Section 3 of H.R. 3200 directs the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to collaborate with State and local governments, Tribal governments, housing authorities, applicable trade associations, nonprofit organizations, and other relevant stakeholders to improve the understanding of the economic impacts of visitation on gateway communities and identify community needs, including housing shortages, demands on existing municipal infrastructure, and accommodation and management of sustainable visitation. The bill further directs the Secretaries to use existing authorities to seek to address the identified community needs by entering into agreements with gateway communities; offering corresponding leases, rights-of-way, or easements; entering into public-private partnerships; or providing financial assistance under existing programs.

Section 4, which is the only section of the bill that is specific to the National Park Service, would require superintendents of national parks to conduct public meetings, consult local stakeholders, and provide a 60-day public comment period for any action that would reduce access to a park for a reason not connected to a specific emergency-type incident. Because the National Park Service currently conducts public outreach and solicits public comments for access-related actions at parks such as establishing reservation systems, the Department would like to better understand the purpose of this provision and to work with the sponsor and the Committee to clarify it accordingly.

Section 5 would require the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to establish a single visitation data reporting system to report annual visitation data across all the units of Federal recreational lands and on land held in trust for Indian Tribes, if requested by a Tribe. The data would include estimates for multiple categories of recreation activities. This section would also require the establishment of a “Real-time Data Pilot Program” that would make available to the public data on visitation at: selected Federal land management units; other Federal, State, and local recreation sites near the selected units; and other lesser-known recreation sites near the selected units, in an effort to encourage visitation among recreation sites. In selecting the Federal land management units to participate in the pilot program, the Secretaries would be directed to solicit feedback from gateway communities. The pilot program would consist of 15 units managed by land management bureaus of the Department and five by the U.S. Forest Service; within five years, the program is to include 80 additional sites, 50 of which would be managed by the Department’s bureaus.

Section 6 of the bill would require the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, by January 1, 2024, to establish a digital version of the National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass that can be stored on a mobile device and make that pass available to pass purchasers. The National Park Service, on behalf of all participating Interagency Pass Program agencies, has been actively working on establishing digital passes at individual sites as an option for visitors since it launched a pilot in the fall/winter of 2016/2017. Digital site-specific passes are currently offered at over 80 NPS locations as well as other agency locations.

The Department appreciates the intent of this bill and is broadly supportive of congressional efforts to provide the various Federal land management agencies under its jurisdiction with greater authorities and flexibility to respond, based on the best available data and evidence, to changing needs and evolving challenges in a time of increased visitation to our public lands. We would welcome the opportunity to continue collaborating with the bill sponsors and the Committee to advance these goals.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or the other members of the Subcommittee have.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL T. REYNOLDS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR
CONGRESSIONAL AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE NATURAL
RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL LANDS, CONCERNING H.R. 4984,
THE D.C. ROBERT F. KENNEDY MEMORIAL STADIUM CAMPUS
REVITALIZATION ACT**

September 19, 2023

Chairman Tiffany, Ranking Member Neguse, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 4984, the D.C. Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus Revitalization Act.

The Department supports the goals of H.R. 4984. Our principal interest is in ensuring that the legislation provides sufficient protection for park and recreational areas within the area that the National Park Service (NPS) has long been responsible for administering, directly or through a lease, in the part of the District of Columbia (District) where the former stadium and adjacent parklands are located. The Department defers to the General Services Administration (GSA) for its views on the aspects of the legislation that pertain to that agency.

H.R. 4984 would amend the District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 to direct the Secretary of the Interior to transfer administrative jurisdiction of the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Campus (Campus) to the Administrator of the GSA. The GSA would assume the NPS's responsibilities under the Federal government's current lease with the District. The legislation would direct the development of a new 99-year lease between the GSA and the District that would permit a number of uses, including a stadium and commercial and residential development, subject to the approval of the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts.

Importantly from our perspective, H.R. 4984 would require that, as a condition of using the Campus for commercial and residential development, the lease would require that the District ensure that the development does not materially degrade or adversely impact any lands under the jurisdiction of the NPS; that 30 percent of the land be designated as parks and open space; and that development provides for public access to the Anacostia River and shall not interrupt the Anacostia River Trail. These requirements would help preserve the Federal government's historic commitment to maintaining significant portions of land in this part of the District as park and recreational space.

The Campus sits on land administered by the NPS as part of Anacostia Park. Originally envisioned by the 1901 McMillan Commission as public gardens and recreation space, Anacostia Park was established in 1918 when Congress directed the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the Anacostia River flats and use the fill to create new parkland. In 1924, Congress established what would eventually become the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) which directed the management of Anacostia Park as part of the park, parkway, and playground system of the Nation's capital. In 1933, Executive Order 6166 transferred NCPC's responsibilities for

management of the park, parkway, and playground system, including Anacostia Park, to the NPS.

The District of Columbia Stadium Act of 1957 previously called for transferring the entire Campus to the District following the repayment of the costs to construct the stadium. However, the Campus remained the property of the Federal government. As amended in 1986, the act directed the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to convey ownership of the stadium building, only, to the District and establish a 50-year conditional lease for the stadium grounds and surrounding parking. The 1986 amendments required that the property be used for the purposes of recreation facilities, open space, and public outdoor recreation facilities in addition to a stadium. The lease entered into between the NPS and the District in 1968, pursuant to the 1986 amendments, is set to expire in 2038.

The lease area is approximately 142 acres, including the 11 acres that were occupied by the District-owned former stadium structure. Under the current law, if the leased property were no longer used for the purposes allowed by the 1986 amendments and under the lease, the lands would revert to the Secretary to be administered as part of Anacostia Park and the District would bear the costs of removing structures, or rehabilitating the stadium or land, as the Secretary determines appropriate.

The District currently manages approximately 851 acres of parkland across the city and the leasing of land as directed in H.R. 4984 would present an opportunity for the District to add to those lands and improve its park system. The bill's additional permitted uses (commercial and residential development) would allow the District to implement its plan to transform the Campus from acres of asphalt to a complex focused on community sports, recreation, park space and cultural amenities. The bill's requirement that 30 percent of the land be designated for parks and open space as a condition for residential and commercial development would guarantee public access to a sizeable amount of park land and outdoor recreation areas.

Additionally, the bill's parks and open space requirements would complement NPS park land in the immediate vicinity. Of particular note, within the vicinity is a 32-acre riparian buffer which contains a portion of the Anacostia River Trail and serves as a critical transition from the 142 acres of leased lands to the Anacostia River. This transition zone protects the river from runoff that would otherwise carry sediments and pollutants into the water. It is critical to ensure that this area is maintained as a riparian buffer.

The Department would like to recommend some amendments to the bill as drafted and looks forward to working with Congress. Furthermore, because there are three House committees reviewing this bill and many more steps ahead in the legislative process, we would ask for your support as the bill advances to ensure that it continues to provide for the protection of a sufficient amount of land for open space, park and recreation purposes, consistent with the Federal government's historic commitment to that goal. We look forward to working with you toward that end.

Chairman Tiffany, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.