

Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior
House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Federal Lands

March 18, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record on the following legislation: H.R. 3286, the Mammoth Cave National Park Boundary Adjustment Act; H.R. 4290, the Downwinder Commemoration Act of 2025; H.R. 5555, the Monterey Bay National Heritage Area Study Act; H.R. 6062, to transfer administrative jurisdiction over certain parcels of federal land in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia; and H.R. 7031, Making National Parks Safer Act.

H.R. 3286, the Mammoth Cave National Park Boundary Adjustment Act

H.R. 3286 would authorize an expansion of the boundary of Mammoth Cave National Park by approximately 551 acres and remove the statutory ceiling on appropriations for land acquisition for the park, which was set at \$350,000 in 1942.

Mammoth Cave National Park was established in 1926 to preserve its cave system and the scenic valleys of the Green and Nolin rivers in Kentucky. It is the world's longest recorded cave system, with over 426 miles explored and mapped. In 1981, it became a UNESCO World Heritage site for its extensive cave system and unique geology. The park also protects several threatened and endangered species, including various bats.

Two caves near the park's southern boundary host 150,000 to 200,000 hibernating endangered gray bats. One cave is a federally designated Critical Habitat for the endangered Indiana bat. In 2019, The Nature Conservancy acquired these caves and the 551 acres of forested land on the surface. More recently, The Nature Conservancy has offered to sell the land to the NPS for a price significantly below market value.

The 551 acres are not located within Mammoth Cave National Park's current legislative boundary and are not contiguous to its current boundary. Therefore, an Act of Congress is needed to allow the NPS to acquire them. The Department does not support this legislation as the NPS is focusing its resources on addressing critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

H.R. 4290, Downwinder Commemoration Act of 2025

H.R. 4290 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to place a plaque at White Sands National Park to honor the Downwinder communities of New Mexico who suffered detrimental health effects as a result of exposure to radioactive fallout following the detonation of the first atomic bomb on July 16, 1945.

To be permanently commemorated in a national park is a high honor, affording a degree of recognition that implies national importance. Commemoration can be accomplished when Congress specifically authorizes it, or when there is a compelling justification for the recognition, and a commemorative work is the best way to express the association between the park and the person, group, event, or other subject being commemorated. The Department defers to Congress on whether to memorialize the New Mexico Downwinder communities at White Sands National Park.

H.R. 5555, Monterey Bay National Heritage Area Study Act

H.R. 5555 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating certain land in California as the Monterey Bay National Heritage Area (NHA). The National Park Service (NPS) defines an NHA as an assemblage of natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition and that are best managed through partnerships. The Department recognizes the importance of the area proposed for study. However, we do not support H.R. 5555, as the NPS is focusing its resources on addressing current critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

H.R. 6062, to transfer administrative jurisdiction over certain parcels of federal land in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

The Department supports H.R. 6062. H.R. 6062 authorizes a transfer of administrative jurisdiction over three parcels of Federal land totaling approximately 71.51 acres in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, from the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to the Secretary of the Interior, to be administered by the NPS as part of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. In addition, the legislation authorizes the transfer of administrative jurisdiction of approximately 25 acres of Federal land in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, from the Secretary of the Interior to the CBP, to be administered as part of the CBP Advanced Training Center.

Although the CBP and the NPS have delegated authority to acquire interests in real estate under certain circumstances, neither agency has the general authority to effect a transfer of administrative jurisdiction over the parcels at issue. Therefore, an Act of Congress is needed to authorize the transfers.

The NPS has worked with the CBP toward the goal of this exchange over multiple years and across multiple Administrations. The proposed land transfer would add a site of exceptional historical significance to the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Located on School House Ridge, this property was a key position during the 1862 Civil War siege of Harpers Ferry, from which Confederate General “Stonewall” Jackson directed his forces. Bringing this land under NPS stewardship would ensure its long-term protection as a nationally important battlefield

landscape. In return, CBP would receive 25 acres of land that borders its Advanced Training Center. This parcel is ideally suited for future development and would allow CBP to expand its training capabilities to meet growing mission demand.

H.R. 7031, Making National Parks Safer Act

The Department supports H.R. 7031. H.R. 7031 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to upgrade 911 service infrastructure in units of the National Park System for better connectivity and interoperability using common standards and modern communication technologies and formats. NG911 systems are designed to transmit and receive bandwidth-intensive data—for example, video and images—that can enhance situational awareness and lead to better-informed response decisions. The systems use geospatial data to locate callers. Upgrading legacy systems could help save lives and equip the NPS to better protect our nation’s natural and cultural resources.

The legislation directs the Department to complete an assessment of the implementation status of NG911 at existing NPS emergency communication centers and to estimate the cost to purchase, operate, and maintain NG911 throughout the system. Subsequent to the assessment, H.R. 7031 directs the Department to develop a plan to install NG911 at identified locations.

The NPS has 41 recognized dispatch centers that provide law enforcement and emergency services communications across more than 125 NPS sites and mutual aid agencies. In addition, numerous parks receive dispatch services through agreements with federal, state, or other local partners. The assessment would focus on these existing 41 dispatch centers, although the plan may reflect a future state of consolidation to best meet mission requirements. In addition, each state has its own laws that establish the framework for 911 services and NG911. These statutes outline the responsibilities of state agencies, local governments, and public safety entities in providing and managing 911 services, including NG911. Each of these entities has the power to decide what solutions, technologies, and vendors it will use to achieve NG911, which will make interoperability more difficult to achieve. State jurisdiction regarding 911 and their respective NG911 implementation plans will impact the feasibility of upgrading all NPS systems.

It is worth acknowledging that transitioning to NG911 is a resource-intensive effort, requiring significant investment in infrastructure, software, and training, and it may take multiple years for implementation. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee to create a path for NPS to obtain the resources necessary to meet this initiative’s goals.