

Committee on Natural Resources

Rob Bishop Chairman
Markup Memorandum

August 31, 2018

To: All Natural Resources Committee Members

From: Majority Committee Staff – Terry Camp and Holly Baker
Subcommittee on Federal Lands (x6-7736)

Markup: **H.R. 6678 (Rep. Barbara Comstock)**, To direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain National Park Service land in Fairfax County, Virginia, to the Friends of the Claude Moore Farm.
September 5, 2018, 10:15 AM; 1324 Longworth House Office Building

H.R. 6678, “Claude Moore Farm Land Conveyance Act”

Summary of the Bill

H.R. 6678, introduced by Representative Barbara Comstock (R-VA-10), authorizes the conveyance of 69 acres of National Park Service land associated with the Claude Moore Colonial Farm to the organization “Friends of the Claude Moore Colonial Farm Inc.”

Background

The Claude Moore Colonial Farm is a living history site in McLean, Virginia that depicts life for a typical tenant farm family in 1771.¹ Cultivated fields and livestock set the stage for the farm’s staff and volunteers to provide demonstrations of 18th Century skills and educational programs for visitors. The farm is part of George Washington Memorial Parkway and was initially operated by the National Park Service (NPS). A few years after opening in 1973, budget constraints led NPS to redirect staff and funding away from the farm operation and threatening its future viability.² Local community members stepped up with an offer to operate the farm as a non-profit cooperative.³ The Friends of the Claude Moore Colonial Farm at Turkey Run (“Friends”) was chartered, and in 1981 signed a cooperative agreement with NPS to operate the farm and provide visitor services.⁴

¹ “Facts about the Farm: A Public/Private Partnership.” Claude Moore Colonial Farm website.
<http://1771.org/about/>

² “Facts about the Farm: A Public/Private Partnership.” Claude Moore Colonial Farm website.
<http://1771.org/savethefarm/#1492393009739-13c6f134-d84c>

³ *Id.*

⁴ Agreement Between Friends of Turkey Run Farm, Inc. and United States of America, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region, George Washington Memorial Parkway—with Amendments and Extensions. Entered into June 5, 1981. <https://www.nps.gov/clmo/learn/management/upload/CMCF-Agreement-compiled-Accessible.pdf>

The farm has a uniquely independent status in NPS and is a model of a successful public-private partnership. Under the agreement, the Friends assumed responsibility for funding, maintaining, improving, staffing, and operating the farm. The annual operating budget of the farm grew from \$87,000 in 1982 to more than \$400,000 in recent years, due to the increased support of the community and the popularity of the farm's programs.⁵ Over the past 37 years, more than \$8 million in private funds have been raised and expended for the operations of the farm, and over \$2 million in additional private contributions have gone into capital improvements.⁶ Since opening, the farm has welcomed over two million visitors.⁷

The initial cooperative agreement between the Friends and NPS was for 25 years and subsequently extended multiple times. There were several amendments made to the agreement through the years that further defined the terms of the arrangement.⁸ The current agreement is set to expire on December 21, 2018.

The Friends and NPS have considered long-term solutions for the continued operation of the farm including a potential lease, a concessions contract, and a revised cooperative agreement.⁹ Despite multiple attempts to reach consensus on a path forward, differences remain on both sides. While NPS wishes to update the agreement to bring it in-line with existing park policies and regulations, the Friends believe the stipulated requirements will be unduly burdensome and threaten the viability of the farm.¹⁰

H.R. 6678 will begin a new chapter for the Claude Moore Colonial Farm by transferring the 69-acre tract currently assigned for farm operations to the Friends. Entrusting the Friends with full ownership of the farm site that they have successfully operated for over three decades will allow the group to operate and make capital improvements in the most efficacious manner, and will ensure the stable, long-term future of a local and national treasure.

Major Provisions of H.R. 6678

- Not later than 90 days after the enactment of this Act, the Friends of the Claude Moore Colonial Farm Inc. must submit a request for the conveyance to the Secretary of the Interior in writing.
- The Friends shall pay any costs associated with the conveyance.

⁵ "Over Forty Years of Service and Growth". About Us. Claude Moore Colonial Farm website. <http://1771.org/about/>

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ "Organizational Background". About Us. Claude Moore Colonial Farm website. <http://1771.org/about/>

⁸ Agreement Between Friends of Turkey Run Farm, Inc. and United States of America, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Capital Region, George Washington Memorial Parkway—with Amendments and Extensions. Entered into June 5, 1981. <https://www.nps.gov/clmo/learn/management/upload/CMCF-Agreement-compiled-Accessible.pdf>

⁹ "Information About Claude Moore Colonial Farm". Claude Moore Colonial Farm. National Park Service website. <https://www.nps.gov/clmo/learn/management/information-about-claude-moore-colonial-farm.htm>

¹⁰ "Clarifications, and Why We Couldn't Accept the Ultimatum from the Park Service". Blog post dated May 8, 2018. Claude Moore Colonial Farm website. <http://1771.org/clarity/>

- The 69-acre tract to be transferred is the area currently assigned to the Friends for the operation of the living history farm as described in the existing Cooperative Agreement.
- The Secretary of the Interior must complete the conveyance within one year of receiving the written request from the Friends.
- If the land conveyed ceases to be used as an 18th Century living history museum open to the public, title to the land shall revert back to the United States.

Cost

A Congressional Budget Office cost estimate has not yet been completed for this bill.

Administration Position

The Administration's position is currently unknown.

Anticipated Amendments

None.

Effect on Current Law (Ramseyer)

None.