

STATEMENT OF SUE MASICA, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 1957, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF INTERIOR TO CONVEY TO THE MISSOURI RIVER BASIN LEWIS AND CLARK INTERPRETIVE TRAIL AND VISITOR CENTER FOUNDATION, INC. CERTAIN FEDERAL LAND ASSOCIATED WITH THE LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL IN NEBRASKA, TO BE USED AS AN HISTORICAL INTERPRETIVE SITE ALONG THE TRAIL

April 6, 2006

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 1957, a bill to authorize the Secretary of Interior to convey to the Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Trail and Visitor Center Foundation, Inc. certain Federal land associated with the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail in Nebraska, to be used as an historical interpretive site along the trail. The Department supports enactment of S. 1957, with an amendment.

S. 1957 would convey without consideration, all right, title, and interest of the United States in two parcels of land at 100 Valmont Drive, Nebraska City, Nebraska to the Missouri River Basin Lewis and Clark Interpretive Trail and Visitor Center Foundation, Inc. (Foundation). The Foundation would bear all the costs associated with the conveyance. If the Foundation determines to discontinue use of the land as a historic site and interpretive center, the land shall be conveyed back to the Secretary of the Interior.

The three-story Missouri River Basin Lewis & Clark Interpretive Trail & Visitor Center (Center), authorized by the National Trails System Act (NTSA), was designed and constructed

by the National Park Service (NPS). The Center is located on the Federally owned 78-acre site acquired for this purpose, and focuses on the flora and fauna and scientific discoveries recorded by the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Native American people's role in the success of the Corp of Discovery. There is a Keelboat Exhibition Room on the entry level with an authentic replica of the 55- foot-long keelboat used on the journey, and the lower walkout level houses a Theater Educational Room and the Young Explorer's Discovery Wing. There also is an outdoor classroom and an unobstructed view of the Missouri River, part of the route used by Lewis and Clark as they pulled upriver and walked the banks to make the scientific observations and collect specimens of flora and fauna. There are 11 other historic and interpretive facilities along the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

The NTSA specifies that, wherever possible, the facility is to be operated by a non-federal entity. The Foundation was established as the non-federal operating partner and raised the necessary funds. The NPS has provided approximately \$1.1 million to purchase the land, to provide design and construction supervision services, and to develop the facilities and exhibits. The Foundation raised about \$2.2 million toward the cost and development of the visitor center. Construction of the facility began in the spring of 2003 and was completed in July 2004. The Foundation has operated the Center since July 2004, with a substantial Federal subsidy.

The Midwest Region of NPS currently subsidizes the Center out of ONPS base (\$150,000), contingency (\$32,000), and cyclic (\$18,000) funding, for about \$200,000 per year. This helps pay salaries, utilities, routine maintenance, and other needed expenses. It is estimated that it

would cost approximately \$574,000 per year for the NPS to operate the Center for a traditional 7-day per week schedule.

By owning the Center, the Foundation could collect entrance and special use fees to supplement donations for operations and maintenance. Annual visitation for calendar year 2005 was 27,105; based on a typical \$5 entrance fee, that could result in \$135,525. The Foundation projects it could collect approximately \$88,000 in special use fees per year. The two fee types could thus generate about \$223,525 per year.

The passage of S. 1957 would authorize \$150,000 a year for 10 years to assist in the operation of the facility. The NPS spends approximately \$50,000 more than this amount to subsidize current operations. The savings would then be used to assist with other trail partnerships and perhaps contingency issues in other national park units of the Midwest Region.

The Department recommends that section 1(a) be amended to include a map reference to replace the metes and bounds description of the two parcels to be conveyed.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.