

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SOUKUP, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES ON S. 262, TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE ANGEL ISLAND IMMIGRATION STATION IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

April 28, 2005

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 262, to authorize appropriations to the Secretary of the Interior for the restoration of the Angel Island Immigration Station in the State of California. This legislation would authorize appropriations of \$15 million for restoration of the Angel Island Immigration Station Hospital and for other station facilities if excess funds remained.

The Department commends the work that is being done to restore the Angel Island Immigration Station at Angel Island State Park and to make it more accessible to visitors. In fact, the National Park Service has been an active partner in that effort. However, we oppose this legislation. We believe it is inappropriate to use limited National Park Service appropriations to pay for restoration projects for non-National Park Service structures. We encourage the State of California, California State Parks, and the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation to continue seeking other sources of funding for this very worthy project.

For many years, the Department has opposed legislation authorizing appropriations for non-National Park Service construction projects. Many of these projects, like the restoration of the Angel Island Immigration Station, represent an important contribution to the preservation of our Nation's history. However, each time such legislation is enacted and appropriations follow, it

further reduces a limited amount of discretionary funds available to address the priority needs of our national parks and other programs administered by the National Park Service. With the emphasis we have placed on the President's initiative to reduce the deferred maintenance backlog, it has become more important than ever to avoid authorizing funding for non-National Park Service projects that would likely draw funds from the National Park Service's budget.

Angel Island is located in San Francisco Bay, not far from Alcatraz Island. The Federal government built the Angel Island Immigration Station in Winslow Cove and operated it between 1910 and 1940 to enforce the Chinese Exclusion Act. Over one million new arrivals to the United States, including Russians, Chinese, Japanese, Hispanics, and others, were processed through the immigration station, although some never set foot on the island.

The most poignant history associated with Angel Island is that of detained Chinese immigrants. Angel Island is often referred to as the "Ellis Island of the West," although unlike Ellis Island, where immigrants typically spent one day, many of the Chinese immigrants were detained for weeks, months or even years. The Chinese Exclusion Act, in effect from 1882 until 1943, required Chinese immigrants to go to extra lengths to prove that they met the necessary requirements to be allowed to stay. Over 100 poems carved by detainees on walls of the Detention Barracks, expressing the fear, hopes, and despair of those with uncertain futures, provide a first-hand historical commentary on the plight of these immigrants.

The immigration station was closed in 1940 after a fire destroyed the Administration Building and American policy shifted in support of China in World War II. The U.S. Army used the buildings during World War II for internment of prisoners. The Army later vacated the site, and

it fell into disrepair. Angel Island, which also had other military installations, was declared surplus to Federal needs and transferred to the State of California for park purposes in 1963. Today, on the 13-acre site, only the Detention Barracks, Hospital, Power House, Pump House and Mule Barn remain intact, and only the Detention Barracks is open to visitors. Angel Island State Park is reached by ferry and used for sightseeing, hiking, picnicking, educational trips, and limited camping.

The Secretary of the Interior designated the Angel Island Immigration Station as a National Historic Landmark in 1997. In late 1998, Congress appropriated \$100,000 for the National Park Service to evaluate the feasibility and desirability of preserving and interpreting sites within Golden Gate National Recreation Area, including Angel Island Immigration Station, that are related to immigration; we are continuing to work to complete this study. A few months later, the National Park Service, California State Parks, and the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation formed a partnership consortium to undertake two major projects: (1) develop a restoration and interpretation strategy for restoration work at the Angel Island Immigration Station, and (2) explore the feasibility of developing a Pacific Coast Immigration Museum to provide interpretation and education related to immigration and migration to the West Coast. The consortium's efforts led to securing \$15 million in state funds and \$1 million in grants and donations for restoration work on the immigration station.

The National Park Service has also contributed technical assistance and managed contracts for reports that were completed in 2002 – a Historic Structures Report, Building Condition Assessments, a Poem Preservation Study, and Cultural Landscape Report for the immigration station. These reports were intended to serve as baseline studies to guide preservation and use

decisions. In addition, in 2000, the Angel Island Immigration Station received a \$500,000 grant for conservation work through the National Park Service's Save America's Treasures program.

As a follow through on the consortium's agenda, the National Park Service has also been the conduit for appropriations from Congress of \$280,000 in FY 2002 and \$385,000 in FY 2004 for in-depth feasibility studies for the Pacific Coast Immigration Museum.

As the activities listed above show, the National Park Service is playing an active role in promoting the commemoration of immigration history on the West Coast, which is unquestionably a nationally significant story, by working in partnership with the State of California and the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation. We are proud of the work the Service is doing toward planning and promoting the restoration of the immigration station and the Pacific Coast Immigration Museum, as these two entities will make an important contribution to the understanding of immigration history in this part of the country—and they will be significant additions to the historical attractions within Golden Gate National Recreation Area. However, we do not believe it is appropriate for the National Park Service budget to be used as a major funding source for the restoration of the Angel Island Immigration Station, a state property.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the other members of the committee may have.