

**STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK , ACTING DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 1418 AND H.R. 2330 TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CARRY OUT A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING CAMP HALE AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM.**

**JULY 22, 2009**

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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. 1418 and H.R. 2330, the Camp Hale Study Act. The U.S. Forest Service (White River National Forest) currently manages Camp Hale as a part of the National Forest System.

The Department supports both S. 1418 and H.R. 2330, with an amendment to section two to include the US Forest Service in a joint study with the National Park Service for the future management of Camp Hale and to delete section three. However, we feel that priority should be given to the 47 previously authorized studies for potential units of the National Park System, potential new National Heritage Areas, and potential additions to the National Trails System and National Wild and Scenic River System that have not yet been transmitted to Congress.

S. 1418 and H.R. 2330 are almost identical and both bills would authorize the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary), to conduct a special resource study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating Camp Hale as a unit in the National Park System. The study would also determine the methods and means for protection and interpretation of the Camp Hale site by the National Park Service, other federal, State, or local government entities, or private or nonprofit organizations. Not later than three years after funds are made available, the Secretary is directed to submit the results and recommendations of the study to Congress. The bill includes language to assure the study would not impact valid existing water rights in place upon the date of enactment. S. 1418 also specifies that the study would not impact the ability to construct and operate infrastructure necessary to develop and use those water rights. We estimate that this study will cost approximately \$300,000.

Located in and managed by the White River National Forest, in west-central Colorado, Camp Hale was established in 1942 to provide winter and mountain warfare training during World War II, because of the natural setting of a large, flat valley bottom, surrounded by steep hillsides suitable for training in skiing, rock climbing and cold weather survival skills. The size of Camp Hale varied between 5,000 and 247,243 acres when it was an active military installation.

Managed by the US Forest Service (White River National Forest), The Camp Hale Formerly Used Defense Site, is now used year-round by the public as a recreation area and is included on the National Register of Historic Places.

Since the time Camp Hale was used for military training, there have been numerous discoveries of unexploded ordinance (UXO) there. As recently as 2003, during efforts to contain a wildfire, UXO used during the training of U.S. troops in World War II was found on the site.

Efforts to remediate public risk from any remaining UXO at Camp Hale continue. The funding for any response actions at Camp Hale will depend on how the UXO sites there rank nationally. Depending on that rank, and available federal dollars, the remedial investigations for some or all Camp Hale munitions may not occur for several years. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has discussed evaluating the hazard liabilities and remediating the site with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to a transfer.

The story of Camp Hale and the men and women who trained there reflects the adaptability our nation showed during the last World War. Many of those who trained there went on to develop alpine skiing as a recreational activity, significantly influencing the economy of Colorado and many other western States. Studying and determining how best to preserve and protect Camp Hale and to commemorate the sacrifice and heroism so many Americans exhibited as a result of their training is laudable.

We suggest that both bills be amended in section two to include the US Forest Service in the study to determine the future of Camp Hale and to remove section three, which includes language concerning water rights. The study recommended in both bills would examine the suitability and feasibility of designating Camp Hale as a unit in the National Park System, including evaluating all current uses and rights associated with the land. Since the bill only authorizes a study of the site, there is no possibility of the study having any affect on any water rights. As such, we believe the water rights language in both bills is unnecessary and redundant and we recommend the section be deleted.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you or any other members of the subcommittee may have.