

**STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. WHITESELL, REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 459, TO MODIFY THE BOUNDARY OF THE MINUTEMAN MISSILE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**July 19, 2013**

---

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 459, a bill to modify the boundary of the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site in the State of South Dakota.

The Department supports S. 459. This bill would transfer administrative jurisdiction over two parcels of Buffalo Gap National Grasslands from the U.S.D.A. Forest Service (FS) to the National Park Service (NPS) for administration as part of Minuteman Missile National Historic Site in Philip, South Dakota. Of the land transferred, 25 acres would be used for a visitor facility and administrative site and an additional 3.65 acres would be used for the construction of a parking lot and other administrative uses.

The new visitor facility and administrative site would be located north of exit 131 on Interstate 90 in Jackson County, South Dakota. Minuteman Missile's enabling legislation states, "*On a determination by the Secretary of the appropriate location for a visitor facility and administrative site, the boundary of the historic site shall be modified to include the selected site.*" The enabling legislation also included a map of the visitor center site indicating that the proposed area would be 10 acres in size. Later planning indicated that a minimum size for the visitor center site would require 25 acres. National Park Service (NPS) and FS personnel, in consultation with our respective solicitors, have determined that in view of the increase in acreage, it would be appropriate to provide for that increase in new legislation. There would be no cost involved in this land transfer.

The 3.65 acres is located directly adjacent to the Delta 1 Launch Control Facility. The parking lot will be used to accommodate visitors to this facility. Currently, visitors must park inside in the fence of the launch facility, but this is an intrusion on the cultural landscape. In addition, the parking lot is not large enough to accommodate all visitors to this site.

The FS is in agreement with the recommended land transfers and has provided Minuteman Missile National Historic Site with an outline of the land transfer process. The NPS architects and engineers conducted an on-site visit in March 2009 to determine the number of acres necessary for the land transfer. They met with representatives from the FS and agreed to pursue the transfer.

Public Law 106-115 established the Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. The General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) scoping began in 2001 and the record of decision was signed on July 2, 2009. The GMP's preferred alternative included the development of a visitor center/administrative facility and a land transfer from the FS to the NPS for the site of the facility and recommended the preferred location at I-90 South Dakota Exit 131 with up to 25 acres for the complete facility. The GMP also recommended the development of an unpaved parking lot and other support functions on the 3.65 acres at the Delta 1 Launch Control Facility to provide for additional opportunities for visitors arriving in commercial and school groups, RVs and passenger vehicles.

The estimated cost to build the visitor center and administrative site is \$4.4 million, and the estimated cost of annual operations and maintenance of both facilities would be approximately \$750,000. All funds would be subject to NPS priorities and the availability of appropriations.

The transfer between the NPS and the FS would be conducted in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I look forward to working with the Committee on a technical issue with the map reference. I am prepared to answer any questions from members of the Committee.