

STATEMENT OF VICTOR KNOX, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 4049, TO AMEND THE ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE APOSTLE ISLANDS NATIONAL LAKESHORE IN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES, TO ADJUST THE BOUNDARY OF THAT NATIONAL LAKESHORE TO INCLUDE THE LIGHTHOUSE KNOWN AS ASHLAND HARBOR BREAKWATER LIGHT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

June 10, 2014

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 4049, a bill to amend the act to provide for the establishment of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in the state of Wisconsin, and for other purposes, to adjust the boundary of that National Lakeshore to include the lighthouse known as Ashland Harbor Breakwater Light, and for other purposes.

The Department supports the enactment of H.R. 4049 with the amendments discussed below.

H.R. 4049 would adjust the boundary of the Apostle Island National Lakeshore (Lakeshore) to include the Ashland Harbor Breakwater Light, thereby transferring ownership of the historic 1915 lighthouse to the National Park Service (NPS) from the U.S. Coast Guard in accordance with previously enacted legislation which mandates that any Federal property located within the boundaries of the Lakeshore be transferred to the Secretary of the Interior without further administrative action. H.R. 4049 ensures that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can maintain the breakwater upon which the lighthouse stands, and, in accordance with the terms of the previously enacted legislation, the U.S. Coast Guard can continue to maintain a Federal aid to navigation in the lighthouse. All three agencies would be required to cooperate in their operations so that each of their agency missions is served.

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, located on the south shore of Lake Superior, is responsible for the care of what renowned lighthouse historian F. Ross Holland, Jr., has described as “the largest and finest single collection of lighthouses in the country.” The park manages six historic light stations, and a total of eight standing light towers – more than in any other unit in the National Park System. All of the lighthouses currently located within the boundary of the Lakeshore, as well as the Ashland Harbor Breakwater Light, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Lakeshore has developed into one of the premier locations in the National Park System for historic preservation and education centered on lighthouses, including interpretive programs highlighting the stories of light keepers and the expansion of the United States in the late 19th century through maritime commerce. In 2006, Apostle Islands rehabilitated the 1863 Raspberry

Island Lighthouse, which is a very popular visitor attraction. This year, the Lakeshore is concluding a major historic preservation project that will rehabilitate the 1856 Old Michigan Island Light, the oldest in the park, and significantly improve conditions at four other light stations.

All of the lighthouses currently managed by Apostle Islands National Lakeshore were transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to the National Park Service as part of a Congressionally authorized boundary adjustment and land transfer in 1986 that mandated that any Federal property located within the boundaries of the Lakeshore be transferred to the administrative jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior. At the time of the 1986 transfer, the future of the Ashland Light was not in question.

In May 2012, the Coast Guard announced its intent to dispose of the Ashland Light under the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act (NHLPA). The NHLPA, enacted in 2000 as an amendment to the National Historic Preservation Act, provides a public process for the disposal of Federally owned historic light stations by allowing them to be transferred at no cost to Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit corporations, educational agencies, and community development organizations. The first step is the determination of the property as "excess to service requirements" by the U.S. Coast Guard and its identification as a historic structure. This determination is reported to the General Services Administration and notice is given that applications may be made for the structure. If an application is accepted, the lighthouse is simply transferred to the applicant subject to compliance with requirements to maintain the light and make it available to the public.

No public or private entity, aside from the NPS, expressed interest in obtaining and maintaining the Ashland Light through the NHLPA process. However, as the Ashland Light is not within the existing park boundary, a boundary adjustment is needed to clarify that the property will be administered as part of the park.

The Ashland Light sits in Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay, less than two miles offshore of the small city of Ashland, Wisconsin. The tower is visible from most of the city's waterfront, and the light shines brightly at night. Images of the Ashland Light are everywhere in the city; they adorn the logos of the local newspaper, the Chamber of Commerce, and many local businesses. Few residents, however, have actually visited the Ashland Light or understand the vital role it played in one of the busiest ports on Lake Superior a century ago.

The Ashland Light is currently in fair condition, but its long-term survival as part of the nation's maritime heritage is not assured. The NPS and the local community are optimistic that the condition could be improved and appropriate visitor educational opportunities could be provided in the future if the Ashland Light were managed as part of Apostle Island National Lakeshore. With the addition of the Ashland Light, the NPS would manage all of the nationally significant historic lights in the region, further enhancing the park's role in historic lighthouse preservation and education.

The Department would recommend three amendments.

The Department recommends deleting the portion of the amendment made in Section 2 that provides buffer zone language. The park boundary adjustment in H.R. 4049 includes only the lighthouse itself, not any of the waters of the Bay. The NPS has no authority to manage or permit activities outside of park boundaries. Fishing, boating, snowmobiling, and all other existing uses of the Bay's waters are not affected by this bill. The buffer zone language is unnecessary.

The Department recommends that the portion of Section 2 of the bill directing the Federal agencies to cooperate in their operations be amended to clarify Congressional intent. The bill does not otherwise alter the statutory standards or other mandates of the three agencies, nor does it affect the ongoing need for them to work cooperatively to carry out those mandates in the area, as they currently do with respect to other lighthouses within the boundary. We would be glad to work with the Subcommittee to amend the existing language to ensure that the bill does not affect the missions of these agencies.

Finally, the Department recommends deleting Section 3, which directs that no additional appropriations are to be authorized for the Lakeshore as a result of this boundary adjustment. The enabling legislation of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore makes no reference to the authorization of appropriations. In the absence of such authorizing language, adding language that specifically restricts the increase of appropriations for this particular boundary adjustment could be construed as prohibiting any future increase in appropriations for the park even if that increase was unrelated to the addition of the Ashland Light.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I am prepared to answer any questions from members of the Committee.