

November 5, 2009

The Honorable Raul M. Grijalva
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests
and Public Lands
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests
and Public Lands
House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Representative Bishop:

As the Subcommittee meets today to receive testimony on national parks legislation, we write in strong support of H.R. 3388, the Petersburg National Battlefield Boundary Modification Act, and wish to thank the Subcommittee for holding a hearing on this important legislation.

We commend Representative Randy Forbes for his outstanding leadership in the preservation of unprotected hallowed ground on the battlefields in the Petersburg, Virginia, area by introducing this legislation to expand the boundary of the Petersburg National Battlefield. The 292-day siege of Petersburg took its toll on soldiers and civilians alike as 70,000 combatants became casualties while some civilians were driven from their homes. Almost a quarter of the entire Civil War was fought around the city of Petersburg as Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee came head-to-head in their effort to control the rails and other supply lines which the Confederacy so desperately needed for its survival. Over the course of the nine-and-a-half months and 108 separate engagements covering more than 176 square miles, the conflicts at Petersburg were the most extensive and complex battles of the entire war. The outcome of the longest siege in American history proved pivotal as well and set the stage for the surrender of the Confederacy only seven days after the fall of Petersburg.

The Petersburg National Battlefield has experienced threats to physical resources and to the visitor experience from incompatible residential, commercial and industrial development along park borders due to the impact of high growth in surrounding counties. Significant portions of nationally significant battlefields related to the Petersburg Campaign have already been lost with development of an industrial park, a steel recycling plant and residential housing. Concerned about these losses, the National Park Service developed an *Assessment of Integrity Report* that identified nationally significant battlefield lands critical to the park's mission that lie outside its boundaries. Twelve nationally significant battlefields totaling approximately 7,238 acres met National Park Service criteria for integrity, interpretability, suitability and feasibility for protection. These battlefield areas were included in the Final General Management Plan and within the recommended boundary expansion for the park.

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If enacted H.R. 3388 would further the Petersburg National Battlefield General Management Plan by:

- Providing Congressional authority to the National Park Service for a 7,238-acre boundary expansion of Petersburg National Battlefield as recommended by the National Park Service's General Management Plan.
- Authorizing the Secretary of Interior and the Secretary of the Army to move forward with a small exchange of land (approximately 1.17 acres) between the Petersburg National Battlefield and the Fort Lee Military Reservation adjacent to the Park.
- Providing authority to the Secretary of Interior to acquire and receive donations of land from willing sellers as authorized by the new 7,238-acre boundary expansion.

Our organizations strongly endorse the recommendations listed above, and urge the Subcommittee and full Committee to create a positive, long-term legacy of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War by approving H.R. 3388 this Congress. In addition to honoring those brave men who fought and died on these fields, this legislation would increase heritage tourism in Virginia and would enable Americans to learn more about Virginia's critical role in the final year of the Civil War. We also kindly request Congressional support for funding the future acquisition needs at Petersburg National Battlefield as identified in this legislation.

With the Civil War's sesquicentennial in 2011, Congressional approval and enactment of this boundary expansion legislation during the 111th Congress would appropriately commemorate this chapter of America's history. Thank you for your leadership on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Dan Sakura
Vice President, Government Relations
The Conservation Fund

Jim Campi
Policy & Communications Director
Civil War Preservation Trust

Catherine Gilliam
Virginia Program Manager
National Parks Conservation Association

cc: The Honorable Randy Forbes