

**Statement for the Record
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**House Natural Resources Committee
Subcommittee on Federal Lands
Legislative Hearing**

H.R. 1693, A bill to redesignate the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, Wyoming, as the “Barbara L. Cubin National Historic Trails Interpretive Center”;

H.R. 7254, A bill to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Bay Area Ridge National Scenic Trail;

H.R. 8121, A bill to designate the Christiansted Bandstand at the Christiansted National Historic Site, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, as the "Peter G. Thurland, Sr., Bandstand";

H.R. 8454, A bill to provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over certain Federal land in the State of California;

H.R. 8913, Tulare Youth Recreation and Women’s History Enhancement Act;

H.R. 9248, Recreation Permitting Improvement Act; and

H.R. 9416, Ocmulgee Mounds National Park Redesignation Act

July 1, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record on the following legislation: H.R. 1693, A bill to redesignate the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, Wyoming, as the “Barbara L. Cubin National Historic Trails Interpretive Center”; H.R. 7254, To amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Bay Area Ridge National Scenic Trail; H.R. 8121, To designate the Christiansted Bandstand at the Christiansted National Historic Site, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, as the "Peter G. Thurland, Sr., Bandstand"; H.R. 8454, To provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over certain Federal land in the State of California; H.R. 8913, Tulare Youth Recreation and Women’s History Enhancement Act; H.R. 9248, Recreation Permitting Improvement Act; and H.R. 9416, Ocmulgee Mounds National Park Redesignation Act.

H.R. 1693, A bill to redesignate the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, Wyoming

H.R. 1693 would redesignate the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, located in Casper, Wyoming, as the “Barbara L. Cubin National Historic Trails Interpretive Center”. The Department of the Interior (Department) supports the bill.

Between 1840 and 1890, around 500,000 emigrants followed the North Platte River through the present-day location of Casper, Wyoming, on the Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, and California Trails. Most of these “overlanders” were seeking land, religious freedom, or gold. Their experiences along the way were life-changing, defined by adventure, determination, suffering,

and loss. The BLM manages the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, which allows visitors to experience the drama of life along America's historic trails.

Barbara Cubin represented Wyoming's at-large district in the House of Representatives from 1995 until 2009. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the City of Casper, and the National Historic Trails Foundation began work to create, manage, and sustain a National Historic Trails Interpretive Center to interpret the historic trails in 1992. Rep. Cubin introduced legislation to authorize the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center, which became law in 1998 (P.L. 105290). The center opened in 2002 and since then has hosted hundreds of thousands of visitors.

H.R. 7254, To amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Bay Area Ridge National Scenic Trail

H.R. 7254 would amend the National Trails System Act and direct the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) to conduct a study on the feasibility of designating the Bay Area Ridge National Scenic Trail. The Secretary, in consultation with interested organizations, would be directed to complete and submit the feasibility study to Congress within one year of enactment.

The Bay Area Ridge Trail is a multi-use trail that runs along the hill and mountain ridgelines surrounding the San Francisco Bay Area. When completed, it will extend 550 miles and connect over seventy-five parks and open spaces. The first trail section was dedicated in 1989 and, since that time, over 400 miles have been established.

The Department recognizes the recreational value that the Bay Area Ridge Trail brings to Bay Area residents and visitors. However, we do not support H.R. 7254 as it requires a feasibility study; the National Park Service is focusing its limited resources on addressing current critical needs, including reducing the deferred maintenance backlog.

If the Subcommittee chooses to proceed with H.R. 7254, we recommend amending the one-year study requirement to permit a three-year period, commencing from the date that funds are made available—reflecting the standard timeframe for such studies. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee regarding this proposed amendment.

H.R. 8121, To designate the Christiansted Bandstand at the Christiansted National Historic Site, St. Croix, Virgin Islands, as the "Peter G. Thurland, Sr., Bandstand"

H.R. 8121 would designate the Christiansted Bandstand at Christiansted National Historic Site in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, as the "Peter G. Thurland, Sr., Bandstand".

Peter G. Thurland, Sr. (1892-1984) was a U.S. Virgin Islands master craftsman and a skilled musician who shared these two talents for the betterment of his community. While enlisted in the U.S. Navy, Thurland first assisted in the construction of the Christiansted Bandstand and then played in monthly concerts there with the Christiansted Naval Band. Later, as a civilian,

Thurland founded and conducted the St. Croix Community Band which performed free concerts at the Christiansted Bandstand. Thurland is remembered for his community leadership, his masterful woodworking skill, and his deep love of music.

To be permanently commemorated in a national park is a high honor, affording a degree of recognition that implies national importance. National Park Service management policies note that commemoration should occur only when Congress has specifically authorized it, or when there is compelling justification for the recognition and commemoration is the best way to express the association between the park and the person being recognized. In light of this policy, the Department defers to Congress on the legislation.

H.R. 8454, To provide for the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over certain Federal land in the State of California

H.R. 8454 would transfer 160 acres of Stanislaus National Forest land to the National Park Service (NPS) to be managed as part of Yosemite National Park and concurrently transfers 170 acres of NPS land to the U.S. Forest Service to manage as part of Stanislaus National Forest.

These transfers allow for more contiguous administrative boundaries and work toward remedying land management logistical challenges for both the NPS and USFS. There would be no additional cost to the NPS. The Department supports the bill.

H.R. 8913, Tulare Youth Recreation and Women's History Enhancement Act

H.R. 8913 would release, without consideration, the Federal reversionary interest of the United States in certain lands in the City of Tulare, California, to the Union Pacific Railroad.

In the mid-Nineteenth Century, Congress sought to encourage the development of the West by providing incentives for transcontinental railroads. Among those incentives was the Act of July 27, 1866, authorizing a railroad to be built by the Southern Pacific Railroad. As part of that authorization, the railroad was granted a right-of-way across public lands. The Union Pacific Railroad (the successor to Southern Pacific) currently holds the right-of-way, a portion of which runs through downtown Tulare. The United States Supreme Court has determined that railroad grants issued under the authority of the Act of July 27, 1866, contain an implied Federal reversionary interest in the event that the land ceases to be used for railroad purposes.

In 1998, Public Law 105-195 released the Federal reversionary interest in approximately 12 parcels of public land within the railroad right-of-way so that the Tulare Redevelopment Agency could obtain clear title to any land it acquired from Union Pacific. This law did not cover approximately two acres of land contained in two parcels within the right-of-way that are currently leased to the City of Tulare for an outdoor recreational facility and a historic women's club. The BLM's understanding is that the City of Tulare would like to improve and restore the facilities but cannot proceed without clear title to the parcels, which the city is unable to obtain due to the Federal reversionary interest.

While the Federal Land and Policy Management Act requires the BLM to receive fair market value for such conveyances, the BLM recognizes that in certain circumstances, as determined by Congress, the public benefits of a proposed transfer outweigh financial considerations. The BLM supports H.R. 8913, and recommends amending the bill to update the reference to the legislative map.

H.R. 9248, To amend the FAST Act to include certain recreation activities as covered projects subject to Federal permitting improvement

H.R. 9248 would amend provisions of Title 42, United States Code, by significantly expanding the types of projects eligible for FAST-41 permitting streamlining by adding “recreation” as a covered category. Under the existing FAST-41 permitting framework, covered projects receive enhanced coordination, schedule-setting, and reporting. These projects could encompass a broad range of recreation-related activities, including infrastructure, trail construction, or visitor center upgrades.

Recreation-related infrastructure on public lands often requires coordinated federal review, and applying the FAST-41 framework would help to ensure these reviews are conducted in a timely and transparent manner. By adding recreation as a covered category, the bill provides a clearer, more efficient permitting pathway for projects that improve visitor access and strengthen resource stewardship across the National Park System.

The Department supports this bill, as it aligns with the President’s commitment to making national parks more accessible, more affordable, and more efficient for the American people.

H.R. 9416, Ocmulgee Mounds National Park Redesignation Act

H.R. 9416 would redesignate Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park as Ocmulgee Mounds National Park. The bill confirms that the newly designated national park shall be administered in accordance with the laws generally applicable to units of the National Park System. It also establishes a hiring preference for all members of Indian tribes associated with Ocmulgee Mounds. Moreover, the bill notably allows the Secretary of the Interior to enter into agreements with the Muscogee (Creek) National and other interested Indian tribes to address issues pertaining to the management, conservation, and preservation of resources within Ocmulgee Mounds National Park.

The area proposed to be designated as Ocmulgee Mounds National Park encompasses the traditional homelands of the Muscogee and other Indigenous peoples, numerous nationally significant archeological sites, diverse wildlife and vegetation communities, and provides expansive recreation and visitor opportunities. Ocmulgee Mounds National Park would continue Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park’s commemoration of over 12,000 years of human habitation, spanning from the Paleo-Indian era through the Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian and historic periods, reflecting the deep and continuing connections of many Tribal Nations to this landscape across time.

The bill would also authorize the Secretary, upon request of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, to take approximately 126 acres of land held in fee by the Tribe into trust. Congress, through its plenary authority, can direct the Department to accept and administer lands to be held in trust for the benefit of a Tribe through legislation. Acquisition of land in trust for the benefit of Indian Tribes is essential to Tribal sovereignty and empowers Tribal self-determination in the use of Tribal lands to best serve their communities.

The Department supports H.R. 9416 and looks forward to working with the Sponsor and the Subcommittee to ensure the legislation can be effectively implemented, consistent with applicable authorities and responsibilities.