

**Testimony**  
**of**  
**Tom Ikeda, Executive Director**  
**Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project**  
**on**  
**S. 916, the Minidoka National Historic Site Act**  
**and**  
**H.R. 161, the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act**  
**before the**  
**Subcommittee on National Parks**  
**Committee on Energy and Natural Resources**  
**United States Senate**

**May 15, 2007**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of the Minidoka National Historic Site Act (S. 916) and Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act (H.R. 161).

My name is Tom Ikeda. I am a third-generation Japanese American and am proud to say my family has lived in Seattle for over 100 years. I would have been even prouder to say “continuously for over 100 years” but I cannot say this because of a three year gap from 1942 to 1944 when my four grandparents, my two parents, and my seven aunts and uncles were removed from Seattle and incarcerated at the Minidoka War Relocation Authority camp, in southern Idaho.

Francis Kinoshita, one of my uncles, whom I never had the chance to meet, volunteered from Minidoka to serve in the U.S. Army’s all-Japanese American 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team along with Senator Daniel Inouye. Unfortunately, my uncle was killed in action and was one of 73 battlefield deaths that Minidoka suffered, more than any other camp.

I am also the Executive Director of Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project, a Seattle, Washington, non-profit organization. Densho is a Japanese term meaning "to pass stories on to the next generation," or to leave a legacy. Our mission is to preserve the stories of Japanese Americans who were unjustly incarcerated during World War II. We collect and offer their stories to the public in a manner that reflects our deep regard for who they are and what they endured.

Using digital technology, we provide Internet access to hundreds of video interviews, thousands of historical documents and photographs, and teacher resources to explore democratic ideals and constitutional principles. We seek to educate young people and inspire them to act in defense of liberty and the highest values of our country.

On behalf of Densho and our partner organizations in the Japanese American community, I wish to express our deep appreciation to Senator Larry Craig, Senator Maria Cantwell, Senator Mike Crapo and Senator Patty Murray for introducing S. 916 and to Representative Jay Inslee and

Representative Mike Simpson for introducing related legislation (H.R.161) in the U.S. House of Representatives. I especially wish to recognize Senator Maria Cantwell, who has worked to ensure that Washington state's rich cultural heritage is conserved for future generations as part of the National Park System.

This bipartisan legislation is a testament to the importance of recognizing this chapter in our nation's history and builds on our nation's tradition of conserving historic sites that reflect the broad diversity of our national experience.

Densho fully supports the components of S. 916 and H.R. 161. I am particularly excited about the addition of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial to the boundary of Minidoka. If this legislation is enacted, the Eagledale Ferry Dock site on Bainbridge Island will be the first area managed by the National Park Service (NPS) dedicated to the Japanese American experience in World War II and located close to a large population center. Because of its significance as the point of debarkation for the first group of Japanese Americans to be forcibly removed and detained, Densho believes that the Bainbridge Island Memorial will become a focal point on the West Coast for memories, healing, and education about the story of the 227 Japanese Americans from Bainbridge who were relocated on March 30, 1942. By establishing the Memorial, Congress will authorize the NPS to illuminate the broader story of President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 that led to the incarceration of 120,000 innocent Japanese Americans from across the western United States.

I am pleased to be joined here today by Floyd Mori, National Director of the Japanese American Citizens League. The Japanese American Citizens League, which has multiple chapters in both Washington and Idaho, and the Friends of Minidoka strongly support this legislation.

Densho also supports an amendment to S. 916 or H.R. 161 to expand Minidoka's boundary to include the Farm-in-a-Day property, a 128-acre property adjacent to the Monument. This tract is the NPS's highest acquisition priority because it will enable the NPS to reconstruct an entire barracks block in its original location, as called for in its General Management Plan (GMP).

Let me explain why I think the amendment is important. Two months ago, I had the opportunity to visit the Manzanar National Historic Site in eastern California. At Manzanar, the NPS does an excellent job of preserving and interpreting this World War II-era detention facility. The ability to walk and reflect in the exact location of the former barracks serves as a powerful tool for interpretation. This attention to detail and accuracy reflects historical rigor and makes the events more tangible and real for visitors to the National Historic Site, who number over 90,000 annually.

Including the Farm-in-a-Day property in Minidoka is important because it will allow for the future restoration of an entire block of barracks on its original location, something that isn't possible without boundary expansion legislation. Public comments received during the planning process identified the barracks as the most important buildings to convey the Minidoka story.

To conserve this historic property, The Conservation Fund acquired the land and wishes to convey it to the NPS for permanent management. I ask that a letter in support of the boundary expansion from The Conservation Fund be included in the record.

The acquisition of this tract will also enable the NPS to tell the remarkable story of the Farm-in-a-Day project, when thousands of workers and spectators came together on one day in 1952 to build a farm on the site of the former camp. This project represents an important connection between the camp and the decommissioning of the camp and the development of agriculture in southern Idaho. Building the Farm-in-a-Day was a significant historical event that marked a cooperative effort between the local community, state and federal governments, and the private agricultural industry to establish and demonstrate modern agricultural techniques and equipment.

Today's legislation is possible as a result of two recently-completed planning efforts by the NPS as part of the Minidoka GMP and a Congressionally-authorized special resource study to develop recommendations to conserve the two sites at Minidoka and Bainbridge Island as an integrated, unified and comprehensive resource for public education and interpretation.

### **Minidoka GMP and Bainbridge Island Special Resource Study**

In 2001, the Minidoka Internment National Monument was established as a unit of the National Park System. In the last several years, the NPS has worked closely with the local community in Idaho, as well as Japanese American organizations throughout Idaho, Washington and Oregon, to develop a GMP for the Monument. As part of its planning process, the NPS conducted numerous public meetings in Idaho and across the Pacific Northwest to solicit input from the public about how best to manage the Monument for public education and interpretation. In 2006, the NPS completed its GMP, which included a number of recommendations to strengthen the ability of Minidoka to tell the story of the camp to future generations.

In 2002, Congress passed legislation to authorize the NPS to conduct a special resource study of the Eagledale Ferry Dock site on Bainbridge Island. In working closely with the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial Committee and other partners, the NPS recommended that the eight acre site be added to Minidoka via a boundary expansion.

Densho has examined and commented on the draft GMP for the Minidoka Internment National Monument and the special resource study for the Eagledale Ferry Dock on Bainbridge Island. Densho supports the recommendations of the GMP and special resource study and S. 916, H.R. 161 along with a proposed amendment to include the Farm-in-a-Day property in the Minidoka boundary would implement these recommendations.

### **Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial -- Eagledale Ferry Dock**

Densho supports expanding the boundary of the Minidoka Internment National Monument to include the approximately eight acres of land containing the *Nidoto Nai Yoni*, "Let it not Happen Again," memorial at the site of the Eagledale Ferry Dock. In 2002, Congress passed legislation to authorize the NPS to study the national significance, and feasibility and suitability of

managing the Eagledale Ferry Dock site on Bainbridge Island, Washington as part of the National Park System.

Establishing the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial as a unit of Minidoka will provide an excellent opportunity to tell the story of the journey of the Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans from Bainbridge to Manzanar to Minidoka and back to Bainbridge, as all sites will be managed by the NPS.

### **Land Transfer for Issei Memorial and Former Staff Housing**

As proposed in the GMP and as directed in S. 916, Densho supports the proposed management transfer of approximately 10 acres of land from the Bureau of Reclamation to the NPS at Minidoka. This transfer will allow for the creation of an *Issei* Memorial to commemorate the memory and experiences of the first generation of Japanese Americans, who traveled from Japan to settle in America. The proposed Memorial will honor their sacrifices, hard work, and commitment to their family and chosen country. This proposed transfer also includes the land and historic buildings of former staff housing, which would be used for management purposes.

### **Renaming of the Monument**

As proposed in S. 916, Densho supports the renaming of the Minidoka Internment National Monument to the Minidoka National Historic Site. Changing the name to Minidoka National Historic Site would bring the name into conformity with the Manzanar National Historic Site and other units of the National Park System which have a similar scope and educational mission.

Another reason to change the name is the term "internment" is problematic when applied to American citizens. Technically, internment refers to the detention of enemy aliens after a legal hearing during time of war. At Minidoka, approximately two-thirds of the Japanese Americans incarcerated were U.S. citizens and none were given hearings. It would be a mistake for the Congress to codify this term in statute, which is why Densho supports the legislation to change the name to the Minidoka National Historic Site. This name change was also a recommendation of the GMP.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I commend your vision, leadership, and resolve to hold a hearing on this legislation. For decades, Japanese Americans who were imprisoned by their government lived with shame, guilt, and pain. This legislation, coupled with the annual pilgrimages, the collection of personal stories, and the work of the NPS, has helped promote the healing process for many of the surviving detainees.

As this year marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the mass removal and incarceration in 1942, many of the survivors are in their seventies, eighties and older. To ensure that their stories of suffering, hardship, courage, and hope can be told to future generations, we respectfully request that the Committee approve the amended legislation on an expedited basis.

Mr. Chairman, I would be pleased to answer your questions and provide additional information to you and the Subcommittee. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.

## **Timeline**

**December 7, 1941** - Japan attacked U.S. military bases in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. More than 3,500 servicemen were killed or wounded.

**February 1942** – President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066 which authorizes the mass removal and incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans from California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and portions of Arizona during World War II. Minidoka is one of ten large incarceration centers constructed.

**March 30, 1942** - 227 members of Bainbridge Island's Japanese American community report to the Eagledale Ferry Dock, site of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Memorial, becoming the first group of Japanese Americans to be forcibly removed.

**August 1942** – The War Relocation Authority opens Minidoka Relocation Center in Jerome County, Idaho. Approximately 7,200 Japanese American residents from Washington State are incarcerated at Minidoka after being temporarily detained at the Puyallup Washington Fairgrounds. During its operation, the population at Minidoka peaks at 9,397 men, women and children. Over 1,000 men sign up for the U.S. Army, the highest level of military participation at any of the camp sites. Of those who joined the military, 73 were killed in action, the highest number of any of the ten camp sites.

**1943** –Bainbridge Island Japanese Americans leave Manzanar for Minidoka

**October 1945** – Minidoka closed.

**April 1952** - Over 10,000 people come together from across southern Idaho to turn the former Minidoka camp into a working farm (Farm-in-a-Day).

**February 1980** - Congress establishes and authorizes the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians (CWRIC) to review the circumstances surrounding Executive Order 9066 and the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese Americans and other U.S. citizens during World War II. The CWRIC conducts hearings in nine cities, hears testimonies from over 750 witnesses, and examines over 10,000 documents. In 1983, the CWRIC issues its report concluding that military necessity was not the cause of the mass imprisonment. Rather, "... causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership."

**August 10, 1988** - President Ronald Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act (H.R. 442) into law. It acknowledges that the incarceration of 120,000 individuals of Japanese descent was unjust, and offers an apology and payment of \$20,000 to each living survivor.

**October 1990** – President George H.W. Bush issues a formal apology to surviving Japanese Americans in letters accompanying financial reparations.

**February 1992** - Congress establishes the Manzanar National Historic Site in eastern California, as the first unit of the NPS to commemorate this chapter in our nation's history.

**January 2001** - Minidoka Internment National Monument is established as a unit of the NPS. As part of its planning process, the NPS conducts numerous public meetings in Idaho and across the Northwest to solicit input from the public about how best to manage the Monument for public education and interpretation. In 2006, the NPS completes its GMP.

**December 2002** - Congress passes legislation to authorize the NPS to conduct a special resource study of the Eagledale Ferry Dock site on Bainbridge Island. In 2006, the NPS recommends that the eight acre site be added to Minidoka as a boundary expansion.

### **About Tom Ikeda and Densho**

Tom Ikeda is the founding Executive Director of Densho. Prior to working at Densho, Ikeda was a General Manager at Microsoft Corporation where he developed multimedia CD-ROM titles. Ikeda has volunteered his services full-time at Densho for the past eleven years. Recent awards include being the 2004 recipient of the Humanities Washington Award for outstanding achievement in the public humanities, a 2004 recipient of the JACL Japanese American of the Biennium award, and a 2006 recipient of the Commanders Award from the Seattle Nisei Veterans Committee. Densho awards include the 2005 NPower Innovation Award for innovative technology by a non-profit, and a 2007 ABC-CLIO Online History award from the American Library Association. Densho's Internet address is [www.densho.org](http://www.densho.org).