

STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 2876, TO AMEND THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE STUDY OF THE PIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL.

AUGUST 15, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 2876 to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to amend the National Trails System Act to provide for the study of the Pike National Historic Trail.

The Department recognizes that the Pike trail would be an appropriate subject for a historic trail study. However, we do not support enactment of S. 2876 at this time, as we are focusing resources on reducing the National Park Service's \$11.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog and addressing other critical national park needs. In addition, the National Park Service has not yet completed 20 studies on other sites that Congress previously authorized to determine if these specific areas meet the appropriate criteria for designation as new park units, national heritage areas, national trails, or wild and scenic rivers.

The study authorized by this bill would evaluate a series of routes extending approximately 3,664 miles, which would follow the route taken by Lt. Zebulon Montgomery Pike during the 1806–1807 Pike expedition that began in Fort Bellefontaine, Missouri, extended through portions of the States of Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, and ended in Natchitoches, Louisiana. It would be conducted in accordance with the criteria for national historic trail studies under the National Trails System Act and would include a determination as to whether the trail is nationally significant and whether it is physically possible to develop a trail along a route being studied and financially feasible. The study would cost an estimated \$500,000, based on similar studies of long-distance trails.

The Pike expedition was the first American-led effort to explore the Rocky Mountains and is an important part of the history of Colorado and the American Southwest. U.S. Army General James Wilkinson launched the expedition to provide an escort for Osage Indians traveling from St. Louis back to their villages, make contact with Native American groups on the plains, explore the headwaters of the Arkansas and Red Rivers, and collect information about the Spanish along the southwestern border of the Louisiana Purchase. Lt. Pike and his men explored the headwaters of the Arkansas and Platte Rivers in Colorado before crossing the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, near both the present-day Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, and the headwaters of the Rio Grande River. Pike's group built a small stockade near modern-day Alamosa, Colorado, where they were captured by the Spanish and taken back to Mexico. Pike and the majority of his men were returned to U.S. territory at Natchitoches, Louisiana, on June 30, 1807.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.