

**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 H.R. 5532 AND S. 3439, BILLS TO REDESIGNATE THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA NATIONAL MONUMENT AS THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**December 12, 2018**

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Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 5532 and S. 3439, bills to redesignate the Reconstruction Era National Monument as the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park, and for other purposes.

The Department supports H.R. 5532 and S. 3439 with amendments. We support the redesignation of the Reconstruction Era National Monument as a national historical park, but we recommend amending the bills' land acquisition authority and its authority to establish a Reconstruction Era Network, as explained later in this statement.

The Reconstruction Era (1861 to 1898), a period in which the United States grappled with the question of how to integrate millions of newly freed African Americans into social, political, and labor systems, was a time of significant transformation within the United States. Reconstruction began when the first United States soldiers arrived in slaveholding territories and enslaved people escaped from plantations and farms; some of them fled into free states, and others found safety with U.S. forces.

During the period, Congress passed three constitutional amendments that permanently abolished slavery, defined birthright citizenship and guaranteed due process and equal protection under the law, and granted all males the ability to vote by prohibiting voter discrimination based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude (Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments). Congress also passed a series of Reconstruction Acts that divided the former Confederacy into five military districts and laid out requirements for re-admittance to the Union.

The experience of Reconstruction, and the rebuilding of the Union following the Civil War, played out across America and resulted in changes that fundamentally altered the meaning of citizenship and the relationship between federal and state governments. Central to this drama was the former Confederacy where social, economic, and political changes dramatically transformed the region and where major activities of, and resistance to, Reconstruction took place. African Americans faced steep obstacles as they attempted to claim their newly won rights. Ultimately, the unmet promises of Reconstruction led to the modern civil rights movement 100 years later.

The Reconstruction Era National Monument was created by Presidential Proclamation 9567 on January 12, 2017, to help preserve and interpret this important chapter of our nation's

history. The Monument preserves several sites in Beaufort County, South Carolina, including the Old Beaufort Firehouse in the City of Beaufort, portions of Camp Saxton in the town of Port Royal, and the Brick Baptist Church and Darrah Hall on Saint Helena Island. After the capture of Port Royal, Beaufort quickly became a place of refuge for ex-slaves from across the Low Country and Sea Islands. There, and in neighboring islands, African Americans escaped to freedom, constructed agricultural communities, and built lasting political, religious, and educational institutions. The significant historical events that transpired in Beaufort County, and the physical integrity of many historic locations, make it an ideal place to tell the critical Reconstruction Era stories of experimentation, potential transformation, accomplishment, and disappointment.

Sections 2(b)(1) of both H.R. 5532 and S. 3439 would redesignate the Reconstruction Era National Monument as the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park. Because the Monument preserves and interprets varied resources in several discontinuous sites throughout Beaufort County, renaming the unit as a national historical park would be consistent with the National Park Service's standard nomenclature for units of the National Park System. We note that changing the designation from "national monument" to "national historical park" would not alter the management or operation of the unit in any way. Both designations denote units of the National Park System, and as such are subject to the same laws and eligible for the same funding sources.

Because this legislation would make this unit a congressionally designated unit, we recommend amending the bills to include the abolishment of the presidentially proclaimed Reconstruction Era National Monument. This change would make the bills consistent with the standard practice in legislation that converts a presidentially proclaimed monument to a congressionally authorized unit. In addition, we recommend substituting a revised legislative map that identifies the site as a national historical park and simplifies the map's format.

Section 2(b)(2) of both H.R. 5532 and S. 3439 provides the Secretary of the Interior the authority to expand the unit's boundary to include any land within the Beaufort National Historic Landmark District and St. Helena Island that has a historic connection to the Reconstruction Era. It also provides authority to acquire other land adjacent to the boundary on St. Helena Island, and to assume administrative jurisdiction of land adjacent to the Camp Saxton portion of the Monument that is currently under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of the Navy as part of the Naval Support Facility Beaufort.

Because of significant research that has been conducted on the properties of the Beaufort historic district and surrounding area, we are well aware of other resources in Beaufort County that would make important contributions at the existing park unit. That research includes: the National Register of Historic Places nomination and inventory (originally nominated in 1969 and updated in 1998); the National Historic Landmark summary listing (1973); and, the Reconstruction Era National Historic Landmarks Theme Study (2017). However, we believe that the acquisition authority is broader than it needs to be in order to include these resources. We recommend amending this section to provide for more targeted acquisition authority.

In addition, before Congress moves ahead on legislation that authorizes the transfer of property the Navy administers as part of the Naval Support Facility Beaufort, we would like to consult with the Navy on this provision.

Section 3 of both bills would establish a Reconstruction Era National Historic Network. We support the goal of raising the profile of other Reconstruction Era sites and resources across the country. However, while establishing a Reconstruction Era National Historic Network could be one way to increase public awareness of this important chapter in our nation's history and enhance visitor understanding of the available resources, it may not be the most appropriate way to do so. In addition, at a time when the Department is focusing resources on reducing the National Park Service's \$11.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog and addressing other critical national park needs, it would be difficult to prioritize a new program without having a better understanding of how it would relate to other National Park Service resources and needs. For these reasons, we recommend amending this section to provide for a study to determine the most appropriate way to commemorate and interpret Reconstruction Era sites and resources in lieu of establishing a Reconstruction Era National Historic Network.

We would be happy to work with the Committee on amendments to achieve the objectives described in this statement.

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