



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

MAY 29 2018

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Chairman, Committee on Energy  
and Natural Resources  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski:

I am pleased to transmit to Congress the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail Special Resource Study. The study was completed pursuant to section 7209 of Public Law 111-11, the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the significance, feasibility, suitability, and desirability of designating the routes associated with the Butterfield Overland Trail as a national historic trail.

The Butterfield Overland Mail Company, also known as the Butterfield Stage, held a United States Mail contract to transport mail and passengers over the "ox-bow route" between the eastern termini of St. Louis, Missouri and Memphis, Tennessee, and the western terminus of San Francisco, California. The postal route and stagecoach service operated from 1858 to 1861. With the advent of the Civil War, this southern mail route was discontinued and moved farther north. Today, "the Butterfield" is a name that is well known to many Americans. The route served a critical need at that time, tying disparate parts of the country together and providing an overland route that ran entirely within the continent's borders.

The study area includes approximately 3,553 miles of trail routes in eight states: Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. Given that 203 miles on the eastern end of the trail don't involve stage lines and approximately 58 miles of the routes are located in Mexico, a total of 3,292 miles were analyzed for this study.

The National Park Service (NPS) conducted the study in accordance with the National Trails System Act (Public Law 90-543, codified as amended at 16 U.S.C. 1241-1251). The routes were evaluated under the feasibility study provisions of the National Trails System Act (NTSA). In addition, to be eligible for designation as a national historic trail, the trail(s) must be nationally significant, have a documented route through maps or journals, and offer significant potential for public recreational use.

The study determined that all of the requirements of the NTSA have been met; the Butterfield Overland Trail was found to be nationally significant, feasible, suitable, and desirable for addition to the National Trails System as a national historic trail. The NPS considered four alternatives and selected *Alternative 4: Designate a National Historic Trail but only with Nationally Significant Routes and Extensions*, based upon to the level of public support and resource protection.

The study included a public involvement process starting in 2012 with 13 public meetings along the proposed routes. Comments received during the study process were overwhelmingly supportive of national trail designation. Environmental screening has revealed that this evaluation of the Butterfield Overland Trail will have no measurable impacts on the environment, therefore the NPS has documented an applicable categorical exclusion (CE) and included the CE in this transmittal.

Although there is public support and NPS selected *Alternative 4: Designate a National Historic Trail but only with Nationally Significant Routes and Extensions*, the Department of the Interior does not support trail designation at this time due to the \$11.6 billion deferred maintenance backlog within NPS.

Thank you for your interest in the National Park Service. An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; the Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives; and the Honorable Raúl Grijalva, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives.

Sincerely,



Ryan Hambleton  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure



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The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy  
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United States Senate  
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Dear Ranking Member Cantwell:

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The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop:

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The Honorable Raúl Grijalva  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Natural Resources  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Grijalva:

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