



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

JUL 07 2011

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are pleased to transmit to Congress the *Manhattan Project Sites Special Resource Study/Environmental Assessment* (November 2009) and *Finding of No Significant Impact* (signed October 18, 2010). The National Park Service (NPS) conducted the study pursuant to Public Law 108-340, which directed the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Energy, to conduct a special resource study to determine the national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for Federal management in designating one or more sites within the study area as a unit of the National Park System. The Department of Energy (DOE) was involved in the development of the study recommendations, and has endorsed the outcome of the study. A memorandum from DOE expressing support for the recommendations is enclosed.

Our recommendation is for the establishment of a Manhattan Project National Historical Park comprised of resources in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Los Alamos, New Mexico; and Hanford, in the Tri-Cities area of Washington state. The unit would be managed in partnership with the DOE, with the NPS management role aligned with its expertise in the areas of interpretation and education. Contributing sites in Dayton, Ohio and in other locations could be incorporated into the national historical park (NHP) by agreements or affiliation but would not be part of an initial designation. The full text of the recommended alternative is found in Revised Alternative E in the enclosed *Finding of No Significant Impact* (FONSI).

The special resource study team undertook an extensive public involvement process, engaging state and local governments, private property owners, interested organizations, and citizens throughout the country. It was noted many times that NPS is the appropriate organization to tell the full story of this highly complex project, which involved many sites and employed tens of thousands of workers. Numerous comments received during the review of the November 2009 public document indicated substantial interest in creating a national park with a NPS presence at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos, and Hanford. Throughout the study process, elected officials in the affected areas expressed similar support.

Staff members within DOE actively participated in the study process. The DOE has expressed its support for a permanent partnership with the NPS; confirmed its commitment to ownership, management and preservation of its Manhattan Project resources at Oak Ridge, Los Alamos and Hanford; and stated its intent to request necessary funding from Congress to carry out these responsibilities. DOE would continue to have full responsibility for operations, maintenance, and preservation of the historic Manhattan Project properties already under its jurisdiction and would maintain full liability for any environmental hazards related to the properties. DOE would also retain full control over any public access to these properties consistent with their mission and security requirements.

The recommendation for a multi-site NHP was identified as the most effective and efficient management option for ensuring the long-term protection of significant resources and for providing opportunities for public understanding of the nationally significant Manhattan Project. The selection was based on the evaluation of several management alternatives in the November 2009 public document, consideration of public comments, and confirmation of the DOE's responsibility for all physical structures, contamination issues, employee and visitor safety, and funding necessary for these actions.

When the study was first published in November 2009, the NPS had significant concerns regarding safety issues for staff and public, and concerns about the ongoing costs of operating facilities with issues and impacts unknown to NPS. NPS felt that any park unit would be feasible only if the NPS role were constrained - that became the vision for original Alternative E, which was found to be feasible. DOE's confirmation of its commitment to ownership, management and preservation of its resources meant that NPS could focus expressly on the interpretation and education functions. These commitments would allow DOE and NPS to each bring the strengths of their agencies to the project.

Given the clarification of roles, NPS found that it would be feasible to manage a multi-site national historical park. While the NPS staffing commitment would increase with the three sites in the revised alternative, costs for property management, visitor safety, and other management issues would not increase over the original Alternative E. NPS has experience in managing parks with sites which are physically distant from one another, including Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (sites in Alaska and Washington State) and many National Historic Trails, which have multiple interpretation sites across the country. Multi-site units are typically administered from a single location, with support staff at alternate locations as appropriate and necessary. Community-based technical assistance is a long-standing NPS program that could easily be adapted to the Manhattan Project sites concept. Technical assistance programs allow communities to determine their priorities for action and provide NPS staffing to assist in carrying out the appropriate projects. If a national historical park is designated, NPS would consult with the public, DOE, and other stakeholders to produce a management plan for the park. The plan would provide more detail about public use of the sites, potential associations for other Manhattan Project sites, the role of the community-based programs, and other management issues.

Should Congress decide to designate the Manhattan Project sites as a part of the National Park System, we recommend that the appropriate language regarding the roles and responsibilities of the two agencies be included in the legislation.

An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate; the Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives; and the Honorable Edward Markey, Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives. Delegations from the affected states of Washington, Ohio, Tennessee, and New Mexico will also receive a copy.

Sincerely,

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Rachel Jacobson
Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish
and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Lamar Alexander
The Honorable Sherrod Brown
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Bob Corker
The Honorable Norm Dicks
The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
The Honorable Ben Lujan
The Honorable Patty Murray
The Honorable Rob Portman
The Honorable Michael Turner
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Dear Senator Murkowski:

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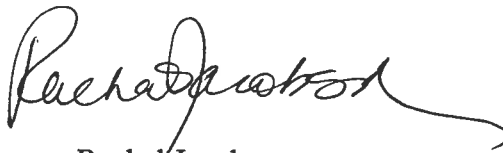
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Given the clarification of roles, NPS found that it would be feasible to manage a multi-site national historical park. While the NPS staffing commitment would increase with the three sites in the revised alternative, costs for property management, visitor safety, and other management issues would not increase over the original Alternative E. NPS has experience in managing parks with sites which are physically distant from one another, including Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park (sites in Alaska and Washington State) and many National Historic Trails, which have multiple interpretation sites across the country. Multi-site units are typically administered from a single location, with support staff at alternate locations as appropriate and necessary. Community-based technical assistance is a long-standing NPS program that could easily be adapted to the Manhattan Project sites concept. Technical assistance programs allow communities to determine their priorities for action and provide NPS staffing to assist in carrying out the appropriate projects. If a national historical park is designated, NPS would consult with the public, DOE, and other stakeholders to produce a management plan for the park. The plan would provide more detail about public use of the sites, potential associations for other Manhattan Project sites, the role of the community-based programs, and other management issues.

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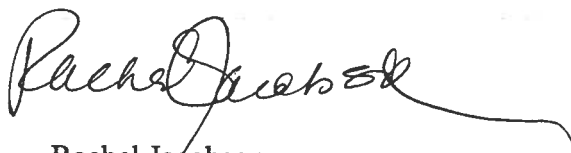
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