

## **Opening Statement of Chairman Mike Simpson**

Interior Appropriations Subcommittee

National Park Service FY 2012 Budget

*Witnesses: Jon Jarvis, Director, National Park Service; C. Bruce Sheaffer, Comptroller, National Park Service; Margaret O'Dell, Deputy Director of Operations, National Park Service*

March 9, 2011

---

The Committee will come to order.

Director Jarvis, I want to thank you and your colleagues for being with us today to discuss the important work of the National Park Service and your priorities for the coming year. I'm going to keep my comments brief so we can hear from you and provide Members the opportunity to ask questions before we attend this morning's Joint Session with the Prime Minister of Australia.

I want to make two observations: First, your budget request for next year makes some decisions that I find a bit puzzling. On the one hand, the budget request for Park Service land acquisition represents a \$234 million increase over the enacted FY2010 level. That's an unprecedented increase in just two years. On the other hand, your budget request cuts construction funding by \$77 million. It seems to me that we ought to be addressing long-term maintenance and repair needs within our parks before acquiring additional acquisitions that will only add to historic funding backlogs. Secondly, I want to commend you and Bruce Schaeffer for the progress made over the last couple of years to address the issue of high unobligated balances within the Rec Fee program. We included report language in the fiscal year 2010 bill raising concern over these high balances and directing the Park Service to take corrective measures. When we first raised this issue, the carryover balance was approaching \$300 million. Your written testimony suggests that this balance is now below \$90 million. One of our subcommittee's primary roles is oversight and your work on the rec fee program demonstrates that we can work together to meet our common oversight goals.

I look forward to focusing on these and other issues this morning but first want to yield to Mr. Moran for any opening remarks he'd like to make.