

Opening Statement of Chairman Mike Simpson
Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
National Park Service FY 2013 Budget
March 8, 2012

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. This is the 10th of 16 budget oversight hearings our subcommittee is holding this year.

At the outset, I want to make several observations:

First, your budget request for next year makes a sizeable, \$24 million (or 16 percent) reduction from fiscal year 2012 in Construction funding which certainly adds to the considerable maintenance backlog—now in excess of \$11 billion—that the Park Service is facing. The budget request also reduces funding for park operations which may potentially lead to a reduction of 200 Park Service employees and cause some park units to reduce visitor services and operating hours. At the same time, the budget request for Federal land acquisition is increased by four percent and the request for LWCF stateside grant funding is increased by 34 percent above fiscal year 2012. It seems to me that we ought to be addressing long-term maintenance and repair needs, as well as meeting the needs of the visiting public, before making additional land acquisitions that will only add to the historic funding backlog.

Secondly, it's come to my attention that multiple areas of the National Forest System have been reviewed (or designated for review) for transfer to the National Park Service or for potential designation as national monuments. I would respectfully encourage the Park Service to weigh carefully these plans—and keep the Congress and the public fully apprised—before proceeding down this path. The management of Forest Service lands differs from the management of Park Service lands and the creation of additional park units from existing Forest Service lands would likely create real concerns in Congress.

Third, I want to commend you for the progress made last year in completing the renovation of the historic Petersen House where President Lincoln died after being shot across the street at Ford's Theatre. A lot of work had been done to renovate Ford's Theatre but until recently, Petersen House had fallen into serious disrepair. I understand from my staff that the rehabilitation of this historic building, visited by thousands of people each year, is now complete. I'm hoping to get downtown soon for a tour and would welcome members of the subcommittee joining me.

Lastly, a great deal of work is now underway on the National Mall. The Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the Reflecting Pool, and the compacted grass panels are now undergoing major renovation and repairs. We look forward to hearing specifically what is being done to address some of these longstanding issues on the Mall.

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.