

from www.eenews.net/EEDaily/2007/10/31/9/#9 -- [Para on HR1286 was put in boldface by RDNelson]

PARKS: Bush admin likes Calif. wilderness bill, Revolutionary trail

by Dan Berman, E&E Daily senior reporter

The Bush administration lent its support yesterday to bills that would expand wilderness areas in California and mark the 600-mile route Gen. George Washington took en route to defeating the British in 1781.

National Park Service Associate Director Karen Taylor-Goodrich said the administration supports H.R. 3022, which would create the John Krebs Wilderness in the California's Sequoia-Kings Canyon National Park. The Krebs wilderness would be about 70,000 acres in the Mineral King valley, the site Krebs helped add to the national park in 1978 after the Walt Disney Co. attempted to build a ski area there. Krebs, then a Democratic congressman from Fresno, Calif., lost his subsequent re-election attempt.

The bill from Reps. Jim Costa (D-Calif.) and Devin Nunes (R-Calif.) would also add an additional 43,500 acres to an existing wilderness area within the park. Taylor-Goodrich suggested some technical changes, such as designating four check dams in the Mineral King area as "potential wilderness additions," which would allow Southern California Edison to continue its hydroelectric power operation indefinitely. As written, the bill would exclude the dams altogether, something that would prevent the Park Service from converting them to wilderness in the future through administrative action.

On the East Coast, the administration supports legislation to create a national historic trail marking the 600-mile route taken by the armies of General George Washington and Count Rochambeau between 1780 and 1783 as they traveled to fight the British. The corridor in H.R. 1286 from Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-N.Y.) follows the route between Newport, R.I., and Yorktown, Va., Washington and Rochambeau took in 1781, and a return path to the north.

The Park Service also supports a bill from Natural Resources Committee Chairman Nick Rahall (D-W.Va.) to study the possibility of designating historic areas in Matewan, W.Va., as park of the park system. H.R. 3821 seeks to commemorate the Battle of Matewan, a 1920 clash involving mine union organizers, local law enforcement and armed Baldwin-Felts detectives hired by mining companies that left at least 10 dead.

The administration also supports:

H.R. 1143, from Del. Donna Christensen (D-V.I.), to authorize leases of lands within the Virgin Islands National Park, but NPS would like to clarify terms and conditions of the proposed lease.

H.R. 1836, from Rep. Chris Shays (R-Conn.), to amend the acquisition authority for land for the development of visitor and administrative facilities at Weir Farm National Historic Site.

H.R. 1545, from Res.Com. Luis Fortuno (R-P.R.), to evaluate the significance of Fort San Geronimo and other related resources in Puerto Rico for possible inclusion as part of the San Juan National Historic Site.

H.R. 3473, from Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah), to provide for a land exchange between the Forest Service and the city of Bountiful, Utah. The Forest Service proposed several technical changes.

Meanwhile, the administration opposes H.R. 3120, from Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), to conduct a special resource study of the Stranahan House in Broward County. The site is far from other NPS locations and would be expensive to maintain and operate, Taylor-Goodrich said.

NPS said it has "no objection" to two bills proposing new studies of sites in Missouri: H.R. 3265, from Rep. Ike Skelton (D-Mo.), to conduct a special resource study of the Harry S. Truman Birthplace State Historic Site, in Lamar, Mo., and H.R. 3616, from Rep. JoAnn Emerson (R-Mo.), to study the suitability and feasibility of extending the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail to include additional sites associated with the preparation and return phases of the expedition.

Finally, NPS asked the panel to defer action on H.R. 415, from Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), to designate parts of the Taunton River in Massachusetts as wild and scenic (see related story).