

DRAFT Testimony of Congressman Chet Edwards  
For  
H.R. 1376  
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands  
House Natural Resources Committee

April 23, 2009

Thank you, Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Rob Bishop, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands on this legislation. I would also like to express my gratitude to Chairman Nick Rahall and Ranking Member Doc Hastings, of the Natural Resources Committee.

It is an honor to stand before you today in strong support my legislation HR. 1376, The Waco Mammoth National

Monument Establishment Act of 2009. This legislation will establish in Texas the Waco Mammoth National Monument as a unit within the National Park System; authorize the construction of administration and visitor use facilities on the site; and instructs the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a management plan for the monument in consultation with Baylor University and the City of Waco.

First discovered in 1978 in my hometown of Waco, the Waco Mammoth Site is North America's largest known concentration of prehistoric mammoths dying from the same event some 68,000 years ago and is a unique find of national and international importance. To date, twenty-four Columbian mammoths including articulated skeletons, a giant tortoise and a camel have been discovered and the potential for future mammoth discoveries is high with

ongoing research activities at the 109 acre site. It has become an area of significant study within the archaeological community, and, as living history, has the capacity to serve as a educational resource for people of all ages for generations to come.

For nearly a decade, I have been proud to join with and support the efforts of the City of Waco, Baylor University and the Waco Mammoth Foundation to fulfill our dream of having the Waco Mammoth Site become a national monument and join the ranks of American landmarks like the Statue of Liberty. Because of their efforts, this project has received four hundred thousand dollars in grant funding, as well as robust private fundraising that brings the monetary support this project has received to over \$3.5 million and construction of permanent protective structure

has already begun. This great effort and initiative should serve as testaments to the dedication and importance that Waco feels for this site. I plan to continue my strong support for this project in every possible way and it will be one of my top priorities in next year's appropriation cycle.

Directed under legislation I authored in 2002, the National Park Service last year completed a Special Resource Study of the Waco Mammoth Site that investigated the possibility for the site's designation as a new unit of the national park system. Specifically evaluating the site's national significance, suitability and feasibility as an addition to the nation's park system, as well as need for federal management; the National Park Service and Department of Interior found that the site met all criteria and reported

favorably on the site's inclusion into the national park system as a partnership led by the National Park Service.

The Special Resource Review found that the site is nationally significant as combination of both *in situ* articulated skeletal remains and the excavated specimens from the site represent the nation's first and only recorded discovery of a nursery herd of Pleistocene mammoths as well as possesses superlative opportunities for visitor enjoyment and scientific study.

The Special Resource Review found that the Waco Mammoth Site not only meets suitability and feasibility criteria for consideration as a new unit of the national park system but would serve to expand and enhance the

diversity of the paleontological resources already represented by other parks in the system.

Lastly, having judged that the Waco Mammoth Site meets the criteria of national significance, suitability and feasibility, the National Park Service and Department of Interior evaluated several management alternatives for the Waco Mammoth site.

They found that the most effective and efficient approach for ensuring the long-term protection of the site and maximize opportunities for public enjoyment and education would be for the National Park Service to lead a partnership management with the City of Waco and Baylor University and I applaud that decision.

Under this arrangement, the National Park Service would take lead responsibility for the protection, scientific study and visitor enjoyment of the site while enlisting the partners in this effort, and the partners would take the responsibility for initiating additional recreational and educational opportunities at the site. This option is supported by Waco and Baylor and I commend the federal agencies for their like-minded approach.

The Waco Mammoth Site is truly an American treasure and one that deserves to be preserved and protected for the education and enjoyment of families and children throughout Texas and the nation. I thank the City of Waco and Baylor University for allowing me to serve a supporting role in achieving their dream. I also would like to thank again, Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Rob

Bishop, and Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify before you today, it has been an honor.