

Opening Statement
Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Building on America's Best Idea: The Next Century of the National Park System
May 25, 2010

The Subcommittee will now come to order. Thank you.

On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the National Park Service Act, known today as the NPS Organic Act. The Act directed the newly created agency to *“conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life [in parks], and to provide for the enjoyment of the same, in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”*

In just six years, we will celebrate the centennial of the signing of that Act and this 100th anniversary is an important opportunity to review the agency's past and explore the possibilities of its future.

The challenges posed by managing a system which includes a burial site for African slaves in Manhattan, a Cold War missile silo in South Dakota, the trails that brought European settlers to the frontier and other sites from America Samoa to Alaska, are significant and growing. Our hearing today brings together a distinguished group of witnesses who will share with us their ideas regarding what lies ahead for our national parks. The last hundred years have set the course and built a tremendous foundation, but as we move into the second century, we are moving into a different world, and our national parks and the National Park service will be tested as never before.

We are grateful to our witnesses for their time and effort to be here today. In particular, I am pleased to welcome National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis to our hearing for his first visit before the subcommittee. Director Jarvis' years of service to the nation's parks as a ranger, superintendent, and regional director are well known and greatly appreciated.

And for those who do not know, Director Jarvis has been serving as the Interior Department's incident commander down in the Gulf for the last three weeks, helping to coordinate the government's response to the oil spill. Director Jarvis, I realize how difficult it was for you to get away from those duties, and we very much appreciate your presence here today. Thank you.

The stewardship of a world-class national park system, handed into our keeping by truly visionary pioneers, is a daunting task. We welcome our witnesses today to help us rise to the occasion.

I will now turn to the Ranking Member, Mr. Bishop, and invite him to make any opening remarks.