

STATEMENT OF VICTOR KNOX, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS, CONCERNING H.R. 4527, A BILL TO REMOVE A USE RESTRICTION ON LAND FORMERLY A PART OF ACADIA NATIONAL PARK THAT WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE TOWN OF TREMONT, MAINE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

June 10, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 4527, a bill that would remove a use restriction on land formerly a part of Acadia National Park that was transferred to the Town of Tremont, Maine.

The Department could support H.R. 4527 if amended.

H.R. 4527 declares that specified lands in Acadia National Park in Maine, which were conveyed by the National Park Service to the town of Tremont, Maine, for school purposes, shall no longer be required to be used exclusively and perpetually for such purposes, and upon their discontinuance of such a use, shall no longer be required to revert to the United States.

The town of Tremont has contacted Acadia National Park concerning land currently used for the town's school. This parcel of land was owned by the National Park Service (NPS) and is known as NPS Tract 06-126. In 1950, Public Law 81-629 permitted the NPS to convey the land to the town to locate the new school. The conveyance was completed in 1951, with a reverter clause included in the deed specifying that the land would revert back to the United States of America if no longer used exclusively for school purposes.

The town is now consolidating schools with a neighboring town and thus this property will no longer be used exclusively for school purposes. The town of Tremont would like to retain ownership and continue to use the developed property for community purposes. This legislation would allow it to do so.

Acadia National Park has no intended uses for the property, and the NPS is agreeable to allowing the town to use the property for broader public purposes, so long as the use of the property will not degrade or adversely impact park resources and values. However, H.R. 4527 would eliminate entirely the requirement that the property revert to the Federal government if it is not used for school purposes. Because the original 1951 conveyance was made without consideration, the bill as introduced would effectively convey Federal property to the town free of cost and with no requirement that it be used for a specific purpose.

For this reason, the Department could support this bill only if it is amended to require that the property revert to the Federal government if does not remain in public ownership for recreational, educational or similar public purposes, or if it degrades or adversely impacts park resources and values as determined by the Secretary of the Interior. The Department

recommends an amendment to H.R. 4527 for this purpose and we would be glad to work with the committee on appropriate language.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions that you or other members of the subcommittee may have regarding the proposed action.