

STATEMENT OF VICTOR KNOX, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 873, TO DESIGNATE THE WILDERNESS WITHIN THE LAKE CLARK NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE IN THE STATE OF ALASKA AS THE JAY S. HAMMOND WILDERNESS AREA.

June 10, 2015

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 873, a bill to designate the wilderness within the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in the State of Alaska as the Jay S. Hammond Wilderness Area.

The Department supports S. 873, which would designate the approximately 2.6 million acres of National Wilderness Preservation System land located within the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve as the "Jay S. Hammond Wilderness Area." This designation is a fitting and appropriate way to recognize Hammond's significant contributions to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), the National Park System, and Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, which was an important part of an extraordinary legacy of public service.

In 1946, following his military service as a fighter pilot during World War II, Jay Hammond came to Alaska and became a bush pilot, guide and trapper. In 1949, Hammond graduated from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, and went to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee, Hammond conducted wildlife surveys of the Lake Clark area and located a homestead along Lake Clark. He lived with his wife Bella in their lakeside homestead from about 1982 until his death on August 2, 2005. Bella still resides in the homestead and enjoys the splendid views of the wilderness area.

In 1959, Hammond was elected to the state legislature and served several terms before being elected as a state senator in 1967. From 1972 to 1974, Hammond was the mayor of the Bristol Bay Borough. In 1974, he was elected Governor of Alaska, and served the state in that role until 1982. During his tenure, he oversaw the building and the opening of the Alaska Pipeline and preserved a large portion of the oil lease revenues in the form of a Permanent Fund which has been in existence for three decades. As a governor who sought to balance the development of Alaska's energy resources with the conservation of the state's vast untouched natural resources, he worked with the Federal government to achieve enactment of the legislation that became ANILCA.

ANILCA protected 104 million acres of land. It added more than 40 million acres in 10 new units of the National Park System, including the 3.86 million-acre Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. The law also designated the 2.6 million acres of wilderness within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Governor Hammond later said that what President Carter had done with the signing of ANILCA was "locking Alaska open" for future generations of Americans to enjoy and preserve for all time.

The National Park Service Management Policies 2006 states that “to be permanently commemorated in a national park is a high honor, affording a degree of recognition that implies national importance.” The policies support the commemorative naming of national park resources only in cases where there is a compelling justification for the recognition. In general, a compelling justification involves an association between the park and the person that is of exceptional importance, as well as a lapse of at least five years since the person’s death. The designation of wilderness within Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in honor of Jay S. Hammond meets these criteria.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions you or other members may have.