

Congressman John T. Salazar
Opening Statement as Prepared
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands
July 19, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to be here today to testify in favor of H.R. 783.

I introduced H.R. 783 along with my friend and colleague Mark Udall, to expand the boundary of Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado.

Mr. Chairman, I want to note that an identical companion bill, S. 126, has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Allard and Salazar and reported favorably from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

This bill authorizes the National Park Service to acquire two critically important tracts at the gateway to Mesa Verde National Park.

One is a 324-acre tract of private land to be acquired from the Henneman family.

The other is a 38-acre tract to be donated to the National Park Service by the Mesa Verde Foundation.

Established by Congress in June 1906, Mesa Verde National Park was the first cultural park to be set aside in the National Park System.

Today, the towns of Cortez and Mancos, in Montezuma County, rely heavily on tourism from Mesa Verde National Park.

The Hennemans have remained steadfast in their determination to see the property included in the park and are anxious to sell their property before the end of the year.

This action is dependent on passage of this legislation and the appropriation of sufficient funds to acquire the property.

Passage of H.R. 783 will also allow the National Park Service to accept the generous donation of 38-acres from the Mesa Verde Foundation.

The Senate has already taken action.

In addition to moving the Senate version of H.R. 783 out of committee, funds to purchase the Henneman property have been included in the Fiscal Year 2008 Interior, Environmental and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Mr. Chairman, in keeping with the long-standing tradition of preserving the resources and cultural heritage at Mesa Verde National Park, H.R. 783 will greatly enhance the visitor experience at Mesa Verde for future generations of Americans.

I urge the Subcommittee to pass this important legislation.