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Authorizing the Establishment of the Knife River Indian Village National Historic Site

United States Congress

US Senate

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AUTHORIZING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KNIFE RIVER INDIAN VILLAGES NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

NOVEMBER 29, 1973.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. BIBLE, from the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 1468]

The Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, to which was referred the bill (S. 1468) to authorize the establishment of the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with amendment and recommends that the bill (as amended) do pass.

The amendment is as follows: In section 2, on page 2, line 17, strike the words "such sums as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act." and insert in lieu thereof the following:

not to exceed \$600,000 for the acquisition of lands and interests in lands and not to exceed \$2,268,000 for development of the historic site.

PURPOSE OF BILL

The purpose of S. 1468, introduced by Senators Burdick and Young, is to authorize the establishment of the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site in North Dakota.

BACKGROUND

The Knife River Indian Villages consist of a cluster of archeological sites located on private land near the confluence of the Knife and Missouri Rivers north of Stanton, North Dakota. Following a field study in 1967, the National Park Service prepared a master plan proposing acquisition of an area totaling 1,292.73 acres which would include four sites: the Big Hidatsa Village, the River Hidatsa Village, the Lower Hidatsa Village, and the Buchfink Site. S. 1468 proposes inclusion of a fifth site, Amahami Village.

General description of sites—

The first three villages contain the remains of earthlodge communities of the proto-historic and historic Hidatsa Indians. Two of these sites are historically documented as Hidatsa and as such are the only villages of this tribe surviving to allow research and interpretation of their culture. They offer a unique opportunity to interpret in depth the story of a major native cultural transition from prehistoric times to the mid-19th century. Of five earth-lodge villages on the Upper Missouri mentioned by Lewis and Clark as being occupied in 1804, only these two remain.

The national significance of these sites is detailed by the National Park Service as follows:

The cluster of villages, spanning a period of several centuries, contains the remnants of earth-lodge dwellings or house rings, cache pits, burials, fortifications, and travois trails—all in an extraordinarily fine state of preservation and integrity. These features, located in the relatively unspoiled setting of the Knife River's debouchment into the Missouri River, provide the media to dramatize certain ethnological and historic themes which have a unique focus here:

A widespread aboriginal culture characterized by earth-lodge villages and a horticulture/buffalo-hunting complex that dominated the middle Missouri region for several centuries at the dawn of the European-American invasion.

One of the major sites, and the best surviving examples of the adaptation of aboriginal farming practices of the eastern woodlands to the environment of the northern Great Plains. The techniques and new crops developed by these Indians were adopted by American settlers.

The evolution of house types, village patterns, fortifications, and burial methods resulting from diverse environmental and cultural factors.

A major hub for trading activities, both intertribal and with the fur traders; also a major source of horses, without which the culture of the Plains Indians could not have evolved. Inevitably, this was the scene of many confrontations between the Canadians, the French, the Spanish and the Americans.

The ethnic origins of the Crow Nation of Montana (both the river and mountain branches), and an unparalleled opportunity for telling the story of a plains agricultural group adapting to a nomadic, equestrian way of life—the prototype Plains Indian.

The classic hostile encounter between the village farmers (Hidatsa) and the plains nomads (Sioux).

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

The Committee amended S. 1468 to limit the amount to be authorized for land acquisition and development costs in lieu of the open end authorization.

COST

Land acquisition costs for the area are estimated to be \$600,000, and development costs are expected to total \$2,268,000.

The cost figures estimated by the Department of the Interior in its report to the Committee for land acquisition and development of the area were based on a total acreage of 550 acres. The bill as approved by the Committee calls for an area of some 12,250 acres to be included in the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Subcommittee on Parks and Recreation held open hearings on S. 1468 on November 6, 1973. The Full Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in executive session on November 27, 1973, unanimously ordered S. 1468, as amended, reported favorably to the Senate.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

The favorable reports of the Department of the Interior and the Office of Management and Budget on S. 1468 are set forth in full as follows:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D.C., November 6, 1973.

HON. HENRY M. JACKSON,
*Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Your Committee has requested the views of this Department on S. 1468, a bill "To authorize the establishment of the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site."

We recommend enactment of the bill.

The Knife River Indian Villages in North Dakota, clustered along the west bank of the Missouri River, contain the remnants of earth-lodge dwellings, cache pits, burials, fortifications, and travois trails, all in an excellent state of preservation and integrity. Archeological remains at the site span a period of several centuries.

In addition to their considerable archeological value, these villages have important historical associations. Lewis and Clark visited here often during their stay at nearby Fort Mandan in 1804-1805; and Sakakawea, a guide to the Lewis and Clark expedition, lived here. Alexander Henry, David Thompson, Lisa, Bradbury, Catlin, Maximilian, Bodmer, and John James Audubon were among the early visitors.

The Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments affirmed the national significance of the villages in 1964 when Big Hidatsa Village was recommended for a classification as "of exceptional value" and for Registered National Historic Landmark status.

S. 1468 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to acquire the sites of the villages, together with additional lands as may be necessary, and to administer the area thus acquired as the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site.

We firmly believe that these important archeological and historic remains should be preserved, and we have concluded that they should be preserved and interpreted as a part of the national park system.

The Knife River Indian Villages are representative of the agricultural phase of Plains Indian development. In addition, the Crow Nation had its origin in these villages, when two groups from the village elected to abandon the sedentary village life; the Crow Indians were representative of the nomadic culture of the "late" Plains period. The Knife River Villages, through trade with the related Crow Indians, were instrumental in making horses available to the Plains nomads. Interpretation of the site by the National Park Service would deal with the agricultural village life, the nomadic life of the Plains Indians the visiting of the village by the Lewis and Clark expedition, and early European visitors to the villages.

We estimate land acquisition costs for purchasing 550 acres in fee would be \$114,000 and development costs would be \$800,000. Annual costs of operation and maintenance would be \$150,000 five years after enactment of the bill. This would permit acquisition of the most significant of the remaining sites; the Big Hidatsa would be acquired in one parcel and the Lower and River Hidatsas in a separate detached parcel.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the presentation of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely yours,

NATHANIEL P. REED,
Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET,
Washington, D.C., November 6, 1973.

HON. HENRY M. JACKSON,
*Chairman, Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This is in response to your requests for the views of the Office of Management and Budget on the following bills: 1. S. 1468, a bill "To authorize the establishment of the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site" (requested May 2, 1973); and, 2. S. 1976, a bill "To study an Indian nation's trail within the national trails system" (requested August 13, 1973).

The Office of Management and Budget concurs in the views of the Department of the Interior in its reports on these bills, and accordingly has no objection to the enactment of this legislation.

Sincerely,

WILFRED H. ROMMEL,
*Assistant Director for
Legislative Reference.*