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REGIONAL OFFICE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE
LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION AND THE POTENTIAL EXTENSION OF THE
LEWIS AND CLARK NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL**

October 4, 2006

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the accomplishments of the Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Department of the Interior's views regarding the potential extension of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Two hundred years ago, President Thomas Jefferson built his legacy as he explored the nation's newest land vicariously through the members of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery. They traveled with his list of goals: To establish a trade network across the country, to befriend the American Indians encountered, and to confirm or deny the theory of an all-water Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. In 1806, they returned to tell Jefferson of their trip's challenges, the diverse peoples they met, and the unwavering determination of the Corps that created success.

To commemorate Jefferson's legacy, Corps of Discovery II set out in 2003 with similar goals: to trade knowledge across the country, to befriend American communities along the way, and to follow the Missouri and Columbia rivers to the Pacific. While there is still no Northwest Passage, they found passages of hope, partnership, and understanding. They returned to Saint

Louis with similar stories of arduous travel, diverse and welcoming communities, and satisfaction in creating a legacy of knowledge.

Given two centuries of change between the two trips, Corps of Discovery II was similar to the original Corps. A mixed group of people with different skills and backgrounds joined this journey. They represented the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Forest Service, other Federal and State agencies, and Legacy Transportation. And they all had one ambition in common: to create a legacy. They spent the past four years traveling from Monticello, Virginia, through Saint Louis to the Pacific Ocean, and even included a winter tour through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma.

In each community along the route, three huge tents were set up to house the interpretive media. Under one tent was a child-sized model of the keelboat loaned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In another tent, a walk-through story of the expedition was illustrated in paintings and photographs imprinted on canvas walls. The largest tent housed the signature piece of Corps II, the Tent of Many Voices. Envisioned as a place where presenters from all walks of life would be invited to share their viewpoints of the legacy of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the cultures they met along the way, it became a trading post of knowledge and perspectives.

Local historians and scholars informed their community of their own legacies from the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Some presenters were American Indians reviving traditions that were nearly lost over the past few hundred years, filling in the often-told story about Lewis and Clark

and the expedition's legacies. Corps of Discovery II invited them to revitalize their own history by telling their stories and sharing their cultures, opening connections to all their pasts.

Without a doubt, tribal participation proved the appellation "Tent of Many Voices."

The people and communities worked for years to prepare for the Corps' arrival by holding meetings, forming committees and work forces, and building partnerships. Corp II was welcomed with open arms when they would pull into a new community. This is not unlike the greetings that the original Corps experienced from the native peoples 200 years ago. Captain Meriwether Lewis wrote of the Shoshone, "...these men then advanced and embraced me very affectionately in their way, which is by putting their left arm over your right shoulder...while they apply their left cheek to yours, saying 'I am much pleased.'" The Lewis and Clark Trail lives in the hearts of the people the Corps II met, and its spirit of peace and friendship continues because of those people and their passion for their homeland. The chance to develop a legacy would have been lost without the guidance and hospitality of those the Corps met on the Trail.

The many partnerships it fostered will endure in communities across this nation, partnerships that will help communities come together for common goals, making their communities better places.

Eastern Legacy

There have been many discussions in recent years among scholars and interested individuals concerning whether the sites and routes related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the Eastern Legacy merit being added to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Although there have been several bills introduced in Congress over the past few years to study and/or authorize the

eastern sites as part of the trail, the issue of whether these sites are suitable and feasible additions has not been addressed.

The proposed extension of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail would include the route followed by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, whether independently or together, in the preparation phase of the expedition starting at Monticello, located near Charlottesville, Virginia, and traveling to Wood River, Illinois, and in the return phase of the expedition from Saint Louis, Missouri, to Washington, D.C. This trail extension, commonly referred to as the “Eastern Legacy,” would include Lewis and Clark sites in Virginia, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, and Illinois.

Public Law 108-387 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to update the 1958 Lewis and Clark National Historic Landmark theme study to determine the historical significance of the eastern sites of the Corps of Discovery to assist in the evaluation and identification of sites eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or designation as National Historic Landmarks. The draft report is currently out for review. The final report should be completed by late 2006 or early 2007.

Arguments in the past against extending the trail to include the Eastern Legacy are focused primarily on the common historical understanding of where the expedition itself began.

President Jefferson’s instructions to Captain Meriwether Lewis clearly imply that the expedition began with the ascent of the Missouri River. The actual transfer of title to and power over the Louisiana Territory from France to the United States was not effective until March 10, 1804.

Prior to that date, the Spanish Lt. Governor of Upper Louisiana refused the expedition's request to proceed up the Missouri, so it is also clear that the journey of exploration could not begin until after that date.

The journals of the expedition by Captains Lewis and Clark are the official chronicles of the expedition. On May 14, 1804, the day the expedition left Camp Wood and began its ascent of the Missouri River, Captain Clark wrote in his journal, "The mouth of the River Dubois is to be considered as the point of departure." In his journal, Captain Lewis stated that he had informed President Jefferson, by letter, of the departure; this, too, would seem to imply that the expedition began that day. Opponents also argue that important locations in the Eastern Legacy are already recognized by the trail as certified sites and that they do not need to be connected by a fictive trail. There is also some concern that extending the trail will somehow dilute the attention to and importance of the existing official trail.

Proponents of the trail extension point out that the expedition did not simply spring forth from Wood River, Illinois on May 14, 1804, but involved years of preparation at other locations, including the ruminations of westward expansion and manifest destiny by Thomas Jefferson at Monticello in Virginia; acquisition of firearms at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia; Lewis' training in medicine and scientific observation in Philadelphia; and taking delivery of the keel boat in Pennsylvania and struggling through low water to bring the boat down the Ohio River. Although the field expedition ended in September 1806 with the Corps of Discovery's return to Saint Louis, there were still important tasks to undertake such as reporting to the White House to brief the President on the findings of the expedition. Some would argue that Lewis' death was

attributable in large part to the expedition and that his grave on the Natchez Trace should be a part of the trail. As intended by President Jefferson, the expedition and manifest destiny had far reaching impacts and ramifications beyond the West to American society as a whole, and he certainly considered that his dream of a nation from “sea to shining sea” had been fulfilled, despite the failure to find the mythical “Northwest Passage.”

Whether one is an opponent or a proponent of extending the trail, many are very convinced and passionate in their beliefs.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.