



Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi  
Statement for the Record  
Oversight Hearing of the House Subcommittee on Federal Lands  
“Examining the Spending Priorities and Missions of the National Park Service  
in the President’s FY2016 Budget Proposal”  
National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis  
March 17, 2015

Good morning Director Jarvis. Thank you for your appearance today. I want to take this opportunity to highlight the one National Park Service unit in my district, Puerto Rico, and that is the San Juan National Historic Site. This unit preserves several defensive structures that were built under Spanish rule on the island from the 15<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These structures include a series of forts—San Cristóbal, San Felipe del Morro, and El Cañuelo—and about three-fourths of the city walls, each impressive for its design and durability. Together, these structures give residents and visitors an important window into our past.

It takes special expertise, resources and dedication to preserve these 500-year-old forts and walls from climate pressures, moisture build-up and modern contact. The National Park Service has been our partner in the preservation effort, and I am interested in expanding the Service’s ability to help the government of Puerto Rico preserve the portions of the city walls and other structures from the Spanish era in Old San Juan that are beyond park boundaries.

I am also encouraged by that fact that the Fiscal Year 2016 budget for the National Park Service includes two construction projects for the San Juan National Historic Site. Just under \$2 million

in line item construction is proposed for masonry and drain repair work on the Santa Elena and San Agustín Bastions located along the western side of the city walls, and just under \$1 million is proposed using fee revenue for the extension of the Paseo del Morro National Recreational Trail from El Morro to a historic cemetery—known as the Santa Maria Magdalena de Pazzis Cemetery—in the neighboring community.

I am a strong supporter of this trail project which will help manage foot traffic in a way that best protects the landscape and surrounding natural resources as well as the historic structures. I want to thank the Southeast Region of the National Park Service for continuing to support trail planning through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. I hope this assistance can continue through the next year.

As I mentioned earlier, I would also like to work with you and National Park Service Headquarters on evaluating whether any regulatory or statutory changes would be needed in order to allow the National Park Service to provide technical assistance and resources for the preservation of the portions of the historic city walls in Old San Juan that fall outside the designated park boundaries. We want to find a way where we can strengthen the partnership that exists between the National Park Service and the local government, and extend National Park Service expertise to protect all of this special historic resource and structure.

Additionally, in 2009, Congress authorized the National Park Service to conduct a special resource study to determine whether Fort San Gerónimo which is on the eastern end of Old San Juan should be added to the park boundaries. I understand that the National Park Service has

made steady progress in undertaking this study, and I support continued efforts by the Service to take into account as much public input as possible in evaluating this opportunity for potential inclusion of this fort in the park unit. I also urge that sufficient funds in Fiscal Year 2016 be applied to this study so that the Service can bring it to conclusion as soon as possible.

Last, I note the Centennial and the special emphasis that has been planned nationally to celebrate our parks. I certainly hope this enthusiasm from leadership at the national level for our parks extends to Puerto Rico, and that the Service supports our on-the-ground efforts on the island to bring more visitors to the San Juan National Historic Site. Indeed, on average our park in San Juan is visited by over one million people per year and is an important part of our tourism economy as well as an excellent educational field trip destination for our school children. In closing, I thank you for your leadership, and I thank our National Park Service employees in Puerto Rico for their dedication to their mission.