HON. RICHARD H. STALLINGS OF IDAHO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Monday, November 20, 1989

Mr. STALLINGS. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing legislation with the Craters of the Moon National Monument in southeastern Idaho as our State's first national park. This bill will also create the Great Rift National Preserve. The acreage figures in my bill are only estimates. The costs are being prepared and will be available for distribution shortly.

After many months of discussion and hard work, our protective proposal has been put together. This bill represents a landmark day for the citizens of Idaho. The State of Idaho has been blessed with land areas of national and international significance, a rich art heritage, and many scenic wonders. However, for all of the great public and private land holdings in Idaho, we do not have a national park.

The public lands included in my proposal are currently administered by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Additionally, 7,000 acres of State lands have been exchanged. My proposal also excludes most of the private land.

THE AREA IS NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT

This legislation will protect and preserve a unique geographic system in Idaho which contains volcanic features and nationally significant resources. Designation of Craters of the Moon National Park and the Great Rift National Preserve would safeguard one of the Nation's extraordinary places. They are an integral part of the American people and future generations.

To be eligible for favorable consideration as a national park, a certain area must be nationally significant. Craters of the Moon and the Great Rift certainly meet this test. The two areas offer outstanding examples of a particular type of resource. Both the geologic and volcanic features of the area are unique, and an area of this size and type in Idaho must be nationally significant. The proposal I am presenting meets the criteria.

Since that time, millions of people from all over the world have visited this fascinating area. Some come for a single, short visit while others return time after time, never ceasing to be amazed by the geologic story to be told there. The Craters of the Moon were designated as a national monument at a time when not much attention was paid between a national park and a national monument. It is not unusual for a national monument to be later designated a national park. Recent examples of changes include the Bryce Canyon, Capitol Reef, and Arches. Utah parks were first established as national monuments. The Craters of the Moon area is relatively close to such national travel destination points as Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, and the Sun Valley ski resort. Many visitors pass through Idaho on their way to these areas and make up an important segment of the State's tourism.

Yet, Craters of the Moon remains one of Idaho's most precious places. Idaho has no national park of its own to attract travelers to the area. Designation of the Craters of the Moon as a national park would bring the resource recognition to this Idaho landmark and provide the American people with a quality resource for future generations.

Recreation and tourism are a vital, growing part of our economy. A national park and preserve could attract thousands of tourists each year and help stimulate the economy of many Idaho communities.

OTHER MANAGEMENT PROVISIONS

Hunting will be permitted in the preserve in accordance with federal and State laws. Grazing will be subject to regulations of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The legislation also provides for acquisition of land within the boundaries of the park and preserve. It stipulates, however, that land may not be acquired without the consent of the owner. Boundaries have been determined to exclude most private land.

SPECIAL THANKS TO CRATERS GROUP

This legislative proposal is the result of hard work and a dedicated effort from many Idahoans. I unknown until 1979 when a national park was proposed with concerned citizens and community leaders. The idea to designate a Craters of the Moon National Park has generated enormous interest, enthusiasm, and support throughout Idaho. The proposal has a great deal of merit, and the area is worthy of such designation. Craters of the Moon is my top congressional priorities.

The Idaho State Legislature, Gov. Cecil Andrus, chair of the Idaho State House of Representatives has agreed to exchange a part of the area with the Craters of the Moon National Monument and the Great Rift National Preserve.

Furthermore, a successful effort may require change and compromise. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to consider this bill and I look forward to its early consideration by the House.

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1989

CRATERS OF THE MOON

The Craters of the Moon National Monument comprises the most diverse and geologically recent part of the Idaho lava flow system. It covers hundreds of square miles on the Snake River plain. The dark lava flows and smooth cones dominate the landscape, believed only by patches of grasslands and stands of timber.

The monument contains examples of most of the volcanic features found in the Great Rift area, and is noted for its area of cinder crags, jagged and smooth lava domes, and lava tubes. The swirling heat of the lava surfaces can be felt by SLAM for wilder caves, some containing permanent ice. The area is truly a study in contrasts.

In addition to the current monument area, two special landmarks would be included as part of the system. The Big Southern Butte and Crystal Ice Caves are interesting features of regional and local significance. The Big Southern Butte, a natural landmark, is the most prominent feature in the eastern Snake River Plain. It is over 2,000 feet above the surrounding plain. It is a rhodolith dome about 300,000 years old and possesses an almost undisturbed area of sagebrush and offers spectacular views of the area.

Big Southern Butte is geologically intriguing because it represents evidence of an ancient volcanic eruption and is much older than the nearby basaltic flows of the Great Rift System. The Butte is significant as a historical and cultural resource as a landmark for pioneers following the Oregon Trail.

Crystal Ice Cave, southeast of the monument, is 150 feet below the surface within the Great Rift in the Kings Bowl lava field. The area also is nationally significant because it is a fissure cave rather than a tunnel cave.

GREAT RIFT NATIONAL PRESERVE

My legislation designates 123,040 acres as the Great Rift National Preserve. A national preserve is one of several titles given to a variety of units in the national park system. This category is essentially for land that is not large enough or significant enough to warrant national park status, but it can be used to protect a variety of resources. Activities such as hunting, fishing, and grazing may be permitted to continue, but development will not be allowed to jeopardize the natural values of the area.

The heart of the preserve is the Great Rift area of the many Idahoans live in our great State be-...