

03/17/05 Long Walk feasibility study DRAFT significance statements

Evaluation of NTSA Criterion 2 - A proposed national historic trail must be nationally significant with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, and historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of American Indians may be included. **Criterion 2 is met.**

Significance statements describe the importance of a trail to U.S. heritage. They describe why the trail and its resources are unique within a broader regional, national, and international context. The proposed Long Walk National Historic Trail(s) is nationally significant with respect to many broad aspects of American military, social, economic, and political history.

The NPS study team and a group of tribal authorities and independent scholars met and documented historical themes associated with the routes and their national significance at two conferences, to which the public was invited. These conferences were held in Window Rock, Arizona, and Mescalero, New Mexico, in fall 2004. Draft statements of significance from the Navajo and Mescalero Apache perspectives were developed. Further review by the general public and the National Park System Advisory Board will contribute to evaluation of national significance.

The Long Walk is associated with five themes identified in the *National Park Service's Thematic Framework* (1996). This framework provides guidance to the National Park Service and its partners for evaluating the significance of resources, assessing how well the themes are currently represented in existing units of the National Park System and in other protected areas, and in expanding and enhancing the interpretive programs at existing units of the National Park System.

I. Peopling Places

- Topic 4. community and neighborhood
- Topic 5. ethnic homelands
- Topic 6. encounters, conflicts, and colonization

III. Expressing Cultural Values

- Topic 6. popular and traditional culture

IV. Shaping the Political Landscape

- Topic 3. military institutions and activities

V. Developing the American Economy

- Topic 7. governmental policies and practices

VIII. Changing Role of the United States in the World Community

- Topic 3. expansionism and imperialism

Four of the six NHL criteria apply to properties associated with the Long Walk:

NHL Criterion 1: Properties that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represents, the broad national patterns of United States history and from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained.

NHL Criterion 2: Properties that are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States.

NHL Criterion 3: Properties that represent some great idea or ideal of the American people.

NHL Criterion 5: Properties that are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture

Long Walk Significance Statements:

Criterion 1

I. The wrongness of the U.S. Government's Indian removal policy, which in the 1860s was characterized by forcing native people onto reservations for purposes of protection, education, and assimilation, and subsequently opening tribal homelands for American emigration, settlement, and economic exploitation, can be seen in the inhumane treatment of the Navajo and Mescalero Apache during the Long Walk military campaigns and removal to the Bosque Redondo reservation, and in the cross-generational impacts 140 years later.

Criterion 1

II. The U. S. Army's "experiment" of forcing the Navajo and Mescalero Apache, traditional enemies whose ways of life were vastly different, to settle at the treeless Bosque Redondo reservation was intended as a "lesson to the nation." Instead of leading to assimilation and salvation, the effort was a horrific failure, leading to staggering costs and extreme suffering, disease, depredation, and death of the native people. A contemporary observer (Samuel F. Tappan) compared the conditions at the Bosque Redondo to "the horrors of Andersonville" Confederate military prison in Georgia, revealing national sensitivity.

Due to its remoteness, distance from supply lines, crop failures, and overwhelming numbers of prisoners to feed and clothe, the cost of the Bosque Redondo operation to the U.S. Government was staggering – in the millions of dollars. At the time, it was the largest and most expensive government operation

in New Mexico, and its chronic problems led to food shortages throughout the territory. The tremendous costs eventually led to the transfer of the reservation to the Department of the Interior and eventual closure.

Of an estimated 12,000 Navajo tribal members in the Four Corners area at the time of the Long Walk, approximately 8,000 people went to the Bosque Redondo, with roughly 1,000??? escaping and 7,300??? [check figures] surviving the ordeal and returning to a new reservation in their homeland. This human and cultural loss has taken generations to overcome.

Criteria 1 and 2

III. In military terms, the Long Walk comprised a major campaign element of the U.S. Army's strategy to remove the Navajo and Mescalero Apache from their potentially mineral-rich homelands. Brigadier General James Henry Carleton's strategy, carried out under Colonel Christopher "Kit" Carson's command, led to the round-up and surrender of the Mescalero, and of a "scorched-earth" campaign that destroyed the Navajo people's livestock and food resources, effectively forcing the surrender and incarceration of thousands of people at the Bosque Redondo.

Criterion 1

III. At the same time that a civil war was being waged in defense of the Union and to end slavery in the South, and despite passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865, Navajo people – men, women, and children – were kidnapped off the Long Walk removal routes and forced into slavery in New Mexico households.

Criterion 3

IV. The failure of the U.S. Army to pursue the Mescalero Apache who escaped from the Bosque Redondo, and the decision to allow the Navajo to leave eastern New Mexico and return to a new reservation within their homelands was based upon politics and economics. These actions illustrate the fallacy of the military's goal to strip native people of their lands, culture, and language, and transform them through Christian and practical education for absorption into the dominant society. The rejection of western religion and lifeways, and the desire of the Mescalero Apache and Navajo to retain their culture were woefully underestimated.

The military goal of transforming the Mescalero Apache and Navajo people into settled farmers imbued with western dress, language, and religion reflected the belief of American government and society as a whole, that these actions would resolve the centuries-old Indian "problem."

Criterion 5

V. The traditional homelands of the Mescalero Apache and the Navajo, the Bosque Redondo reservation, and the routes used during removal and return from eastern New Mexico, are integral to the Long Walk story. Observed as a whole, these properties illustrate a way of life and culture forever altered by the events of 1862-1868.

Criteria 1, 2, and 5

VI. The Long Walk (removal and incarceration at the Bosque Redondo) was a pivotal event in Navajo history and culture, and affects every Navajo today in some way.

1. How it changed Navajo as a People

The Long Walk changed the Navajo way of thinking. The Navajo way of life was forever altered, e.g., foodways, economics, technologies were affected by western influences.

The Navajo people adapted and changed with the circumstances of the Long Walk resulting in acculturation into western culture.

2. Treaty of 1868

The Treaty of 1868 led to a shift of culture for the Navajo. The treaty's implementation laid the groundwork for the formation of a central government, economic development, and establishment of an education system. The Navajo leadership structure changed from clan and kinship headmen and women, to a central government providing overall unity and governance. The treaty is still referenced and used in Navajo dealings with the U.S. Government.

The Treaty of 1868 was honored in general by both sides. It was negotiated and signed by the Navajo leaders and by the United States Indian Peace Commissioners at the Bosque Redondo. The treaty resulted in the return of the Navajo people to their homelands. (Navajo chiefs included Barboncito and Manuelito. United States Indian Peace Commissioners included Lieutenant General William Tecumseh Sherman and Colonel Samuel F. Tappan.)

The Treaty of 1868 resulted in the establishment of a sovereign Navajo Nation.

After the treaty's signing, relations improved between the Navajo and their neighbors. A defensive way of life, caused by raiding and fighting, ended. The Navajo and their neighbors interacted in more positive ways.

3. Consequences of the Long Walk events

The return to Navajo home land within the four sacred mountains assured the continuation of traditional cultural lifeways and the survival of the Navajo people.

The Navajo sacred language survived the Long Walk experience. The World War II Navajo Code Talkers used their language as a security classified code that was never broken by the Japanese. This was a major contribution to the end of the War in the Pacific.

The Navajo people survived the Long Walk and have become a major political and economic force in the United States today. The nation has one of the largest tribal populations and the largest land base. Population of the Navajo exceeds 250,000 and the land base is larger than 10 of the 50 states in America.

The return home allowed Navajo culture to flourish. Navajo art and culture is known, celebrated, and recognized around the world.