October 12, 2021

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**MINIDOKA NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE – LAVA RIDGE WIND PROJECT, IDAHO**

For over 20 years, the National Park Service has managed Minidoka National Historic Site to tell the painful stories of the forced incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Minidoka is a place to heal deep emotional trauma, educate the public about racial injustice, commemorate our ancestors and celebrate our community. To many survivors and descendants, Minidoka is sacred ground.

As part of over a century of racism and prejudice against the AAPI community, the government’s decisions during World War II devastated entire communities, separated families and contributed to inter-generational trauma. In the last forty-five years, Congress and Presidents of both parties have taken official actions to acknowledge that the incarceration was wrong and to preserve incarceration sites like Minidoka.

During annual pilgrimages, we gather at Minidoka and share our experiences to help the public better understand the incarceration. Currently, park visitors experience a sense of isolation and remoteness due to the sweeping vistas of surrounding lands and distant mountains. We appreciate NPS’s commitment to protect Minidoka’s fundamental resources and values unimpaired for future generations.

Unfortunately, LS Power, a New York private equity company, seeks to dishonor this sacred ground and destroy the park’s ability to honor our heritage and help heal painful wounds stemming from racial injustice. If approved by the Bureau of Land Management, an agency within the Department of the Interior, the Lava Ridge wind project would mark a step backward in the U.S. government’s acknowledgments that the incarceration was wrong.

At the request of LS Power, BLM recently started the NEPA process to study the project’s impact on the environment. According to NPS, LS Power’s proposal would have significant negative impacts on Minidoka:

* 340 of the 400 wind towers would be visible from the park visitor center.
* 14 towers are located on camp’s historic footprint, including within two miles of the park
* Each tower could be as tall as 740 feet, which is taller than the Seattle Space Needle, with blades exceeding the wingspan of a Boeing 747.
* The proposal would create a visual wall of towers and spinning blades that would dominate 115 degrees of the park's 360 degree viewshed.

In 2009, LS Power sought to build a power line over the entrance to the park. Thanks to the leadership of Secretary Ken Salazar, the BLM agreed to relocate the line away from the park. In order to tell a more complete story of America, we ask DOI to ensure that the park’s fundamental resources and values are unimpaired for future generations and that Minidoka will serve as a place of healing, learning and strength.

**History.** Immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. government took Japanese American men from their homes, separated them from their families and incarcerated them in prisons across the country. On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed E.O. 9066, which ordered the “evacuation” of the remaining Japanese Americans on the west coast to incarceration sites in the western U.S. and Arkansas.

As part of the larger forced removal of over 120,000 Japanese Americans, the U.S. Army ordered Japanese Americans from Oregon, Washington and Alaska into livestock facilities in Portland, Oregon and Puyallup, Washington. Because of the large number of people, the government sited the Minidoka Center near a railroad line in south-central Idaho. From 1942-1945, the government incarcerated over 13,000 people in Minidoka.

Japanese Americans suffered terrible pain and losses. The government destroyed Japantown in Portland and a farming community in Hood River, Oregon. The government separated fathers from their families and imprisoned them in places like Santa Fe, Lordsburg and Fort Stanton, New Mexico. In addition to losing almost all of their personal property, Japanese Americans lost their homes and businesses when they couldn’t pay property taxes. 193 people died in Minidoka. Japanese American soldiers fought and died for freedom overseas, while their families were incarcerated behind barbed wire. Through its required “loyalty oath,” the government further divided the Japanese American community between those deemed “loyal” and “disloyal.”

As World War II was winding down, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes worked to improve camp conditions. The government also allowed people to leave Minidoka. However, the government dispersed families throughout the country and away from the West Coast.  As the Japanese American diaspora rebuilt their lives, they did not talk about their camp experience: the pain was too raw. For decades, Japanese Americans grappled with the emotional pain, shame and anxiety that this could happen again.

**Acknowledgement and Preservation Timeline.** Building on the success of the civil rights movement, Japanese Americans worked with Presidents of both parties to secure official U.S. government acknowledgements that the incarceration was wrong. At the same time, Japanese Americans began to build memorials and preserve incarceration sites. We also worked with partners to organize annual pilgrimages to heal the pain from camp, commemorate the lives of family members who had passed away, and celebrate our AAPI heritage. For over 45 years, Presidents and Congress have taken official actions to acknowledge the injustice of E.O. 9066:

* 1976 – President Gerald Ford signs a proclamation formally terminating Executive Order 9066 and apologizes for the incarceration.
* 1979 – Minidoka listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
* 1988 – President Ronald Reagan signs the Civil Liberties Act
* 1990 – The Japanese American Citizens League and local partners commemorate Minidoka as part of Idaho’s Centennial.
* 1990 – President George H.W. Bush apologizes to camp survivors, who receive $20,000 in reparations.
* 1992 -- Congress passes bipartisan legislation to establish Manzanar NHS in California.
* 2000 – Official groundbreaking of the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism in Washington, DC
* 2001-- President Clinton designates Minidoka as a National Monument.
* 2003 -- the Minidoka Pilgrimage Committee organizes the first pilgrimage.
* 2006 -- President George W. Bush signs the Japanese American Confinement Sites Act into law.
* 2008 -- Congress passes bipartisan legislation to expand and redesignate Minidoka as a National Historic Site and include the Eagledale Ferry Dock site on Bainbridge Island, Washington, in the park.
* 2008 -- President George W. Bush protects the Tule Lake Center as part of a National Monument.
* 2009 -- LS Power seeks to build the Southwest Intertie Project (SWIP) Line over the entrance to Minidoka. At the direction of Secretary Ken Salazar, BLM relocates the SWIP Line away from the park.
* 2010 -- Congress passes legislation to approve the SWIP Line relocation (Sec. 2003, P.L. 111-212)
* 2015 -- President Obama establishes the Honouliuli National Monument in Hawaii.
* 2018 – In *Trump v. Hawaii*, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the majority: “The forcible relocation of U.S. citizens to concentration camps, solely and explicitly on the basis of race, is objectively unlawful …”
* 2019 – Congress redesignates Tule Lake & Honouliuli as National Historic Sites.
* 2020 – NPS opens the new visitor center at Minidoka.
* January 2021 -- Minidoka marks its 20th anniversary as a place for healing, learning and celebrating.
* January 2021 – President Biden signs Executive Order 13985 to advance racial equity “for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality.”
* February 2021 – President Biden reaffirms the formal apology to Japanese Americans.
* April 2021 – Sec. Haaland announces a DOI budget initiative, including funds for Minidoka (EO 13985).
* May 2021 – In signing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, President Biden acknowledges centuries of AAPI and Native Hawaiian leadership to help build our nation, “only to be stepped over, forgotten, or ignored…considered, by some, the ‘other’… it’s wrong.”
* July 2021 – The U.S. House passes bipartisan legislation (416-2) to create Amache National Historic Site.
* August 2021 -- the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces its Notice of Intent for Lava Ridge.
* October 2021 – Brenda Mallory, Chair, CEQ states: “When we protect a place as a National Monument, it is protected for all time, for all people.”

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