

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 183

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating Oak Point and North Brother Island in the Bronx in the State of New York as a unit of the National Park System.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 6, 2009

Mr. SERRANO introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating Oak Point and North Brother Island in the Bronx in the State of New York as a unit of the National Park System.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. OAK POINT AND NORTH BROTHER ISLAND**
4 **STUDY.**

5 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
6 “General Slocum Memorial Study Act”.

7 (b) FINDINGS.—Congress finds as follows:

1 (1) The Area would commemorate the June 15,
2 1904, catastrophic fire aboard the General Slocum
3 steamship, which resulted in the deaths of more
4 than 1,000 people, most of them German immi-
5 grants and their children.

6 (2) At the time of this tragedy, there was a vi-
7 brant German neighborhood, known as
8 “Kleindeutschland” or “Little Germany”, located on
9 the Lower East Side in New York City.

10 (3) Among the churches in Kleindeutschland,
11 St. Mark’s Lutheran Evangelical Church on East
12 6th Street, held an annual outing to celebrate the
13 end of the Sunday school year for neighborhood chil-
14 dren and their families. On June 15, 1904, more
15 than 1,300 people boarded the General Slocum for
16 the annual excursion which was a trip to Locust
17 Grove on Long Island Sound.

18 (4) Nearly everyone in the neighborhood knew
19 someone who died in the ensuing fire or who per-
20 ished in the treacherous waters of the East River
21 near Hell Gate. Many lost their entire families.
22 While most passengers were German, victims and
23 rescuers also included African-Americans, and Jew-
24 ish, Irish, and Italian immigrants.

1 (5) The Slocum tragedy also resulted in the
2 devastation of a lively, bustling, and prosperous
3 lower East Side community. Kleindeutschland dis-
4 appeared forever as its residents fled the reminders
5 of their great losses. Germans left in record numbers
6 and were soon replaced by a new wave of immi-
7 grants. The 1910 census showed only a few German
8 families remained in Kleindeutschland.

9 (6) In the wake of the Slocum disaster, mari-
10 time safety standards were considerably tightened—
11 one of the doomed ship’s legacies.

12 (7) The study area marks the location where
13 the greatest loss of life occurred in this, the most
14 deadly peacetime maritime disaster in American his-
15 tory. North Brother Island is where the General Slo-
16 cum beached and Oak Point is where rescuers as-
17 sembled and hundreds of bodies were brought
18 ashore.

19 (c) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

20 (1) AREA.—The term “Area” means in Bronx
21 County, New York, the shoreline of the area roughly
22 bounded by 149th Street on the west and Oak Point
23 Rail Yard spurs on the east. It also includes North
24 Brother Island.

1 (2) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
2 the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Di-
3 rector of the National Park Service.

4 (d) STUDY.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct
6 a study of the Area to evaluate the national signifi-
7 cance of the Area and suitability and feasibility of
8 designating the Area as a unit of the National Park
9 System.

10 (2) CRITERIA.—In conducting the study re-
11 quired by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall use the
12 criteria for the study of areas for potential inclusion
13 in the National Park System in section 8(c) of Pub-
14 lic Law 91–383 (16 U.S.C. 1a–5(c)).

15 (3) CONTENTS.—The study required by para-
16 graph (1) shall—

17 (A) determine the suitability and feasibility
18 of designating the Area as a unit of the Na-
19 tional Park System;

20 (B) include cost estimates for any nec-
21 essary acquisition, development, operation, and
22 maintenance of the Area; and

23 (C) identify alternatives for the manage-
24 ment, administration, and protection of the
25 Area.

1 (e) REPORT.—Section 8(c) of Public Law 91–383 (16
2 U.S.C. 1a–5(c)) shall apply to the conduct of the study
3 required by this section, except that the study shall be sub-
4 mitted to the Committee on Resources of the House of
5 Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Nat-
6 ural Resources of the Senate not later than 18 months
7 after the date on which funds are first made available for
8 the study.

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