

August 2023



SURVIVORS, DESCENDANTS AND ALLIES SIGN ON LETTER LAVA RIDGE AND MINIDOKA AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC)

The Minidoka Pilgrimage Planning Committee requests your help to protect Minidoka by signing a letter to Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland. The letter asks her to reject LS Power's proposed Lava Ridge wind project and permanently protect Minidoka by designating an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

This letter is modeled on the survivors' and descendants' October 2021 Scoping Letter sent to BLM.

The Pilgrimage Committee plans to share the letter with the Biden Administration, Members of Congress and media outlets to generate press coverage about the importance of Minidoka. On the **third page** of this document, we ask you to provide the following information as appropriate:

Survivors:

Name, Barracks, Age, City, Military service (you or family member), Gold Star Family, Tribal affiliation (Japanese Alaskans)

Descendants (connections to Minidoka survivors or non-survivors and your information):

Name, City

Allies: (connections to Minidoka, any other incarceration site or healing project):

Name, City

We are interested in any connections to New Mexico, such as Santa Fe or Lordsburg, and Fort Missoula.

We are seeking as many people as possible!

By signing this letter, you consent to sharing information you provide with federal officials and the media.

DEADLINE FOR SIGN-ON – Friday, August 4.

How to sign on:

Please fill out page 3 (scan or photograph if necessary) and email back to MPPC team:

minidokapilgrimage@gmail.com

Questions:

minidokapilgrimage@gmail.com

August 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We are Japanese American and Alaska Native survivors of Minidoka, and descendants of survivors, who were wrongfully incarcerated during World War II.

We respectfully ask you to protect the Minidoka National Historic Site and nearby Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands from the proposed Lava Ridge wind project and future projects by designating an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

If approved by BLM, LS Power's wind project would desecrate sacred ground, dishonor the military service and sacrifice of Japanese Americans and Alaska Natives and reverse nearly 50 years of progress on our road to healing.

We have worked to rebuild our lives and overcome racial prejudice. Thanks to over twenty years of National Park Service leadership and bipartisan Congressional support, we've turned a place of trauma into a place for healing and enjoyment.

Through Minidoka's Honor Roll, we commemorate the military service of nearly 1,000 Minidoka incarcerated. We honor the lives of 73 soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice to defend our nation's freedom, while their Gold Star Families remained imprisoned. We admire the courage of Min Yasui and resisters who fought for justice.

We support President Biden's statement that "[p]reserving incarceration sites as national parks and historic landmarks is proof of our Nation's commitment to facing the wrongs of our past, to healing the pain still felt by survivors and their descendants, and to ensuring that we always remember why it matters that we never stop fighting for equality and justice for all. My Administration is committed to maintaining these national parks and landmarks for future generations and to combating xenophobia, hate, and intolerance..."

We also appreciate President Biden's Day One commitment to racial justice and his whole-of-government guidance to federal agencies to protect environmental justice communities and places of worship, as outlined in his April 2023 Executive Order, "Revitalizing Our Nation's Commitment to Environmental Justice for All."

We appreciate your acknowledgment of the tragic parallels between family separations of Japanese Americans and the terrible legacy from Federal Indian Boarding Schools. Many of our family members were separated when they were imprisoned in Santa Fe and Lordsburg, New Mexico, Fort Missoula, Montana and other sites.

To tell our stories and heal the trauma from the incarceration, President Bill Clinton designated Minidoka as a National Monument. Secretary Ken Salazar who protected Minidoka from LS Power's proposed transmission line in 2009.

We support renewable energy and the Administration's commitment to fight the climate crisis without putting a disproportionate burden on people of color. In terms of siting projects on sacred lands, Bill McKibben recently wrote that "repeating the mistakes of our history at this point is truly unforgivable."

We hope that, under your leadership, BLM will not repeat the mistakes of the past. According to BLM, its preferred alternatives in its draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) would have "disproportionately high and adverse impacts to the Japanese American community and Native American Tribes given the importance of setting and feeling ..." Also, BLM's proposed mitigation measures, including conservation easements,

removal of structures in the foreground and scholarships for Pilgrimages would not offset the visual and emotional impacts of Alternatives C, E or some combination.

We encourage BLM to adopt the No Action Alternative in the Lava Ridge final environmental impact statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision. Federal lands around Minidoka constitute Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) which is rooted in our history and important to maintain our cultural identity. We support the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office's finding that Minidoka TCP is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

To protect Minidoka National Historic Site and TCP, we encourage BLM to begin a public planning process to designate 237,000 acres of BLM land as the Greater Minidoka Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

By designating the ACEC, BLM can honor the memories of our parents and grandparents, the lives of 200 people who died in Minidoka and leave a lasting legacy of healing our children, grandchildren, community and nation.

Thank you for considering our request to help our nation avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to achieve its highest ideals of equality and justice.

Sincerely,

Minidoka Survivor:

Name: _____

Prison number: _____

Barracks: _____

Age: _____

City, State: _____

Military service (you or family member): _____

Gold Star Family/non-survivors: _____

Tribal affiliation (Japanese Alaskans): _____

Minidoka Descendant:

Name: _____

City, State: _____

Names and prison numbers of relatives incarcerated: _____

Minidoka Ally:

Name: _____

City, State: _____