

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4436

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Park and Tibes Indigenous Ceremonial Center, as units of the National Park System.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 16, 2017

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico 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 Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Park and Tibes Indigenous Ceremonial Center, as units 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. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS.**

4 (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Park and Tibes Indige-
6 nous Ceremonial Center Study Act”.

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

1 (1) CAGUANA INDIGENOUS CEREMONIAL
2 PARK.—

3 (A) The Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial
4 Park is comprised of approximately 13.5 acres
5 located at the center of Puerto Rico, in the
6 Caguana Ward at the Municipality of Utuado.

7 (B) The park is visited by approximately
8 60,000 students and tourists every year.

9 (C) Efforts to protect the park began in
10 1915, when archeologist John Alden Mason, to-
11 gether with Robert T. Aitken, started research
12 on this archeological site. A final report was
13 issued in 1941.

14 (D) In 1949, the Puerto Rican anthropolo-
15 gist and archeologist, Ricardo E. Alegría start-
16 ed a series of excavations and, in 1964, as Di-
17 rector of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture,
18 ordered the restoration of the park.

19 (E) During 1992, after years of studies
20 and investigations, the National Park Service
21 included the park in the National Register of
22 Historic Places. In 1993, the park received the
23 distinction of a National Historic Landmark.

24 (F) The park has one of the most sur-
25 prising archeological sites of the Antilles, in-

1 cluding 22 petroglyphs on calcareous slates,
2 monoliths located in its main square, and the
3 Cemí Mountain as sentinel.

4 (G) The park museum has a permanent
5 exhibition of more than 80 archeological pieces
6 from the Taíno ancestors. Other pieces are ex-
7 hibited at the University of Puerto Rico Mu-
8 seum, the Puerto Rico Historical Archives, the
9 National Museum of American Indians in New
10 York City, and at Yale University, among other
11 private collections.

12 (H) The Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial
13 Park has unique pieces belonging to precolonial
14 culture, from Puerto Rico and from the Carib-
15 bean, and the best way to ensure their protec-
16 tion of these treasures may be the inclusion of
17 the park as a unit of the National Park Service.

18 (2) TIBES INDIGENOUS CEREMONIAL CEN-
19 TER.—

20 (A) The Tibes Indigenous Ceremonial Cen-
21 ter is located between the wards of Tibes and
22 Portugués in the municipality of Ponce, and is
23 considered one of the most significant indige-
24 nous sites in the Caribbean. The center is vis-

1 ited by approximately 80,000 students and
2 tourists every year.

3 (B) In 1975, Don Luis Hernández—a
4 sugar cane worker—discovered the remnants of
5 indigenous cultures after the massive flooding
6 caused by Hurricane Eloísa.

7 (C) Just after the discovery, the Guaynia
8 Society of Archeology and History from the
9 Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico
10 started the excavations and restoration on the
11 site. The group was assisted by the renowned
12 Antillean archeologist, Ricardo Alegría.

13 (D) After months of excavations, the Soci-
14 ety had discovered the oldest Antillean indige-
15 nous ceremonial site in Puerto Rico, including
16 the largest indigenous cemetery on the Island
17 with more than 186 human remains from the
18 Igneri and Pre-Taíno cultures.

19 (E) Additionally, the Society discovered
20 nine plazas used by the indigenous to dance the
21 areyto, play ball and celebrate ceremonies of
22 great importance. The plazas varied in size
23 from 42 feet long by 35.8 feet wide to 115 feet
24 long by 30.5 feet wide, and were named as fol-
25 lows: Horseshoe Ball Court, Cemí Ball Court,

1 Santa Elena Ball Court, One Row Ball Court,
2 Principal Plaza, Oval or Elliptical Plaza, Bat
3 Ball Court, and Chief Ball Court. The ninth
4 court remains unnamed.

5 (F) The Tibes Indigenous Ceremonial Cen-
6 ter is key in the education of the current and
7 next generations of Puerto Ricans about our in-
8 digenous roots. Thus, the best way to preserve
9 our heritage may be the inclusion of the center
10 as a unit of the National Park Service.

11 **SEC. 2. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STUDY.**

12 (a) STUDY.—The Secretary of the Interior shall—

13 (1) carry out a study regarding the suitability
14 and feasibility of designating Caguana Indigenous
15 Ceremonial Park and Tibes Indigenous Ceremonial
16 Center as units of the National Park System; and

17 (2) consider management alternatives for the
18 Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Park and Tibes In-
19 digenous Ceremonial Center.

20 (b) STUDY PROCESS AND COMPLETION.—Except as
21 provided by subsection (c) of this section, section
22 100507(c) of title 54, United States Code, shall apply to
23 the conduct and completion of the study required by this
24 section.

1 (c) SUBMISSION OF STUDY RESULTS.—Not later
2 than 1 year after the date that funds are made available
3 for this section, the Secretary shall submit to the Com-
4 mittee on Natural Resources of the House of Representa-
5 tives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Re-
6 sources of the Senate a report describing the results of
7 the study.

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