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## **Butterfield Overland Mail Route Study to Begin As Obama Signs Bill Into Law**

FAYETTEVILLE, Arkansas (March 30, 2009)– The National Parks Service will begin a study of the feasibility of adding the Butterfield Overland Mail Route to the National Historic Trails System. The Butterfield Overland Mail Route study is part of the massive Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009, which President Barack Obama signed into law on Monday, March 30, 2009.

The “Ox Bow Route” of the Butterfield Overland Trail travels across through Missouri, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. The study will evaluate a range of alternatives for protecting and interpreting the resources of the trail area, including possible alternatives for potential addition of the trail to the National Trails System.

John McLarty, president of Heritage Trail Partners, said, “The study for national historic trails designation for the Butterfield Overland Mail Route is one that Heritage Trail Partners has been working on for three years. The Butterfield Trail was historically significant for Northwest Arkansas, as it ran from Pea Ridge, Ark., to Ft. Smith, Ark. Thousands of travelers passed this way en route to San Francisco, Calif. We applaud the Congress for this significant step in preserving our history.”

The Butterfield Overland Trail, a 2,800-mile long trail was mandated by the southern Postmaster General and began running on September 15, 1858. John Butterfield was paid \$600,000 to get the mail between St. Louis, Mo., and San Francisco, Calif., in 25 days. Coaches were to run each way, twice a week. Having 25 days to make each run, the coaches traveled day and night to meet this deadline. There were stage stops every 20 miles or so to change teams.

At that time, it was the largest land-mail contract ever awarded in the United States. By contract, the route was required to pass through El Paso, Texas, and Ft. Yuma, Ariz. This path was an extra 600 miles further than the central and northern routes through Denver, Colo., and Salt Lake City, Utah. The southern route, however, was free of snow. To satisfy some political factions, Butterfield also had to make Memphis, Tenn., an

eastern terminal, with the Tipton, Mo., and Memphis, Tenn., routes meeting in Ft. Smith, Ark.

Representative John Boozman, R-AR, originally introduced the Butterfield legislation in 2006. The Butterfield Overland Mail Route is of national significance with respect to broad facet of American trade and commerce. It had a far-reaching effect on patterns of American culture.