

Our View

Sand Creek designation long time coming

*Congress OKs Musgrave-Allard
effort to acknowledge history*

History doesn't differentiate between upbeat or tragic incidents.

Nor should Coloradans, who must share the burden of learning from the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864.

Last week, Congress rightfully approved the creation of the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site near Eads. While not a positive, heroic example of human history, the massacre deserves to be acknowledged for the lessons and potential deterrence it offers for today. Declaring the nearly 2,400-acre site (the act adds 1,465 acres to 925 acres already owned by the National Park Service) as an official part of national history also protects it for descendants of the victims who consider the land to be sacred.

On Nov. 29, 1864, about 700 Colorado militiamen killed more than 163 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians in a raid on their camp at the site. Most of the victims were women, children and elderly men, and Congress determined the attack was unprovoked, according to The Associated Press.

Congress' OK also is significant because it marks Rep. Marilyn Musgrave's first original bill approved by Congress. Sen. Wayne Allard, of Colorado, was the Senate sponsor of the legislation. Musgrave and Allard, along with Ben Nighthorse Campbell before them, have been pushing for the designation for years.

A unique element of the legislation is that it allows for cooperative management of the land between the National Park Service and the Northern and Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. Land acquired from willing sellers will be placed in a tribal trust to pay for park operations and maintenance.

For years, many Coloradans chose to ignore the past involving the Sand Creek Massacre. This designation is necessary acknowledgement of the past with a positive nod to the future.