

Sand Creek Massacre designated historical site

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WASHINGTON — President Bush on Tuesday signed into law Rep. Marilyn Musgrave's first successful piece of legislation. The Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site Trust Act of 2005 ensures the designation as a national historic site of 1,465 acres in eastern Colorado where 150 Indians

were massacred in 1864.

It was Nov. 29 of that year when 700 Colorado volunteer cavalymen raided the Sand Creek camp of Cheyenne chiefs Black Kettle and White Antelope. Under the command of Col. John Chivington, the cavalry brutally butchered 150 Indians. Most of the victims were children, women and the elderly.

"After 140 years, it is fitting the president of the United States signs into law my bill, which affirms the government's relationship with the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes," said Musgrave, R-Fort Morgan. "This massacre marks a dramatic point in their history and a poignant moment in the American frontier." She

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added that she was "pleased to have the opportunity to help create a historic site that will honor the innocent lives lost and preserve this solemn place."

The legislation places the land into a trust for the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma. It also designates the Secretary of the Interior to manage it as a national historic site. Sen. Wayne Alard, R-Colo., sponsored a companion bill in the Senate.

People living in the lightly populated Eastern Plains area see the site as a way to commemorate history while attracting tourists, and their money.

The Sand Creek act adds the 1,465 acres to 920 acres already owned by the National Park Service near Eads in Kiowa County.

At a hearing in April on the bill, a park service official testified that the additional land would justify designating the area as a national historic site.

"It's going to be very important to our community," said Janet Frederick, executive director of the Kiowa County Economic Development Foundation. Some 1,444 people live in the 1,771-square-mile county; 740 in Eads, she said.

Local officials envision a visitors center at the site, said Frederick, noting that the community has tried to embrace and welcome descendants of those killed in the massacre.

"It shouldn't have ever happened," Frederick said of the massacre. "But we think it's an important piece of history and needs to be remembered. Not all of our history is happy."