

# Internment Sites Preservation

By Richard Simon  
*Los Angeles Times* Staff Writer

## \$4.8 Million Sought for Preservation of Internment Sites

• **Budget:** Clinton proposal includes funding a visitors center at Manzanar, where Japanese Americans were incarcerated. Also funded would be a study on making another camp a national park.

**W**ASHINGTON—President Clinton is seeking \$4.8 million to further preserve World War II internment camps used to confine 120,000 Japanese Americans.

In the federal government's latest effort to atone for uprooting those lives, Clinton's new budget asks Congress to pay for a visitors center at Manzanar National Historic Site—a former internment camp in California about 200 miles northeast of Los Angeles—and to buy or trade land to protect former camps in Wyoming, Utah, Idaho and Arkansas.

The administration also wants to fund a study on preserving and possibly adding the Tule Lake camp in California near the Oregon border to the national park system, as well as other sites that park service officials say illustrate "key events or social movements" on the World War II home front.

The proposed spending was announced by Vice President Al Gore and is one of a long list of items in the administration's budget plan that target California, a vote-rich state that is vital to Gore's hopes of succeeding Clinton.

In recently announcing the funding request, Gore called it "an important step to honor and preserve the experiences of Japanese Americans who paid a dear price and persevered during one of our nation's most trying hours."

Rep. Robert T. Matsui (D-Sacramento), a former war internee, said Tuesday that he will be among those pushing for congressional approval of the spending. "By preserving these sites for future generations of Americans to visit, a terrible but important chapter in our history stays relevant," he said.

Matsui co-sponsored the 1988 law that led to \$1.6 billion in reparations by the U.S. government to 82,219 former Japanese American internees.

"The passage of redress legislation was important to help heal the wounds of those who were incarcerated without due process," Matsui said. "But we still need to do more to ensure that future generations of Americans will know what our country is capable of when the Constitution is abrogated. By protecting and preserving [former camps], that memory will never be erased."

Rose Ochi, a former internee and a Washington-based Justice Department official who serves on an advisory committee for the Manzanar site, said that with passage of Clinton's funding request "the Japanese American dream of keeping this memory alive will come to pass."

The internment camp proposal is among a number of items benefiting California contained in the massive budget Clinton unveiled Monday. Much of the spending plan's details came to light Tuesday.

Included, for instance, is proposed funding for a study on adding to the national park system sites related to Cesar Chavez and others involved in the movement to improve conditions for farm workers in California



Former internees and families join in memorial service at Manzanar National Historic Site last April.

Also included: \$4 million to buy about 1,000 acres of private land, including giant sequoias, south of Sequoia National Park; \$100 million to preserve salmon habitat in California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska; \$1.25 million for the Salton Sea restoration project; and \$2.24 million to dredge Ventura Harbor's entrance.

The bulk of the \$4.8 million for internment camp preservation would be used to convert an old auditorium into a visitors center at Manzanar, the only former camp that is part of the national park system.

Although rangers occasionally lead walks through the camp, there is no display space for visitors to examine photographs or other exhibits of the site's past, said Interior Department official Destry Jarvis.

Callers to the ranger's office at the Manzanar camp reach a recorded message announcing: "The park is not yet operational, as there are no visitor facilities located at the site."

The funding request for preserving the internment camps follows a park service study on the history of: the forced relocation and the condition of 35 sites where Japanese Americans were held, including temporary "assembly centers" a Santa Anita racetrack in Arcadia and at the Pomona fairgrounds.

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