

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE NATIONAL PARKS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 5466, TO AMEND THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT TO DESIGNATE THE CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL.

September 28, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 5466, a bill to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. The Department supports this bill with a proposed amendment.

H.R. 5466 would designate the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail as a component of the National Trails System. The trail would be administered by the Department of the Interior in coordination with the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network and the Chesapeake Bay Program. In addition, the Secretary of the Interior would consult with other Federal, State, Tribal, regional, and local agencies, and the private sector in the administration of the trail. No land could be acquired for the trail outside the boundary of any Federally managed area without the consent of the owner of the land.

The National Park Service recently completed the feasibility study for this trail authorized by Public Law 109-54. The study found that the proposed trail fully meets the criteria for designation as a National Historic Trail. We have also received a considerable number of public comments supporting designation of the trail from State and local governments in the region, and from interested organizations and individuals.

In March 2006, the National Park System Advisory Board found the routes of John Smith's voyages to be nationally significant, a major requirement in the finding of national trail feasibility. The Advisory Board concluded that the trail is of national significance for its association with the following themes: (1) *Ethnic Heritage (American Indians)*; (2) *Exploration and Settlement*; and, (3) *Commerce and Trade*.

As we approach the 400th anniversary in 2007 of the Jamestown Settlement and the beginning of Captain John Smith's explorations, the enactment of this bill is most timely. The proposed trail would follow a series of routes extending approximately 3,000 miles along the Chesapeake Bay and the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay in the States of Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, and the District of Columbia that trace Captain John Smith's voyages charting the land and waterways of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Captain John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in a series of voyages and travels from 1607 through 1609, while executing his company's directives to search for a "northwest passage" to the Pacific Ocean. Smith's two major explorations occurred in the summer of 1608, each leaving from Jamestown, Virginia. Between the two voyages, Smith and a small crew traversed the entire length of the Chesapeake Bay, explored the shoreline of the lower half of the Eastern Shore, and ventured into the major tributaries along the western shore of the Bay. Smith had extensive interactions with Native Americans and recorded significant information about these peoples and the general Chesapeake environment in his book published in 1612. He also made one of the first and most detailed maps of the Chesapeake Bay. In Smith's words "heaven and earth never agreed better to frame a more perfect place for man's habitation."

Four hundred years later, the Chesapeake Bay's basic geography remains relatively similar to Smith's time, but much else has changed. More than 16 million people live in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with the densest concentrations at locations adjacent to where Smith traveled ( Washington, DC, Baltimore, MD and the greater Norfolk/ Hampton Roads area in VA). Human uses of the Bay region have caused significant impacts on the Chesapeake environment and the Bay itself. The establishment of a national historic trail traversing the routes of John Smith's early voyages would likely provide increased public knowledge of the history, and sensitivity to the valuable resources of the Chesapeake Bay, as well as increased recreational opportunities.

The National Park Service enjoys a close association with the Chesapeake Bay and local governments and organizations in the region through the Gateways and Water Trails Network, authorized by the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998. This partnership system of 147 designated Chesapeake Bay Gateways serves to connect the American public with the resources and themes of the nationally significant Chesapeake Bay. As coordinator of the network, the National Park Service is also authorized to provide technical and financial assistance to gateways for enhancing interpretation, improving public access, and stimulating citizen involvement in conservation and restoration efforts. All of these efforts would complement the proposed trail. H.R. 5466 provides for coordination of the trail with the Chesapeake Gateways and Water Trails Network and the Chesapeake Bay Program.

We would request that the bill be amended in Section 2 to provide for appropriate referencing of the official map of the trail, which would be consistent with the Senate companion bill (S. 2568) as reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. This amendment is attached to my testimony for the committee's consideration.

This concludes my prepared testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the committee might have.

Proposed amendments to H.R. 5466

On p. 2, strike lines 8-21, and insert the following new subsection:

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, a series of water routes extending approximately 3,000 miles along the Chesapeake Bay and the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay in the States of Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, and in the District of Columbia, that traces the 1607-1609 voyages of Captain John Smith to chart the land and waterways of the Chesapeake Bay, as generally depicted on the map entitled ‘Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Map MD, VA, DE, and DC’, numbered P-16/8000 (CAJO), and dated May 2006.

“(B) MAP.—The map referred to in subparagraph (A) shall be on file and available for public inspection in the appropriate offices of the National Park Service.”