

Congressman Frank M. Kratovil Jr.

Testimony before the Natural Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

March 24, 2009

Chairman Grijalva; Ranking Member Bishop, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify before your subcommittee on an issue of importance to both my constituents and all those interested in preserving and protecting land on behalf of Harriet Tubman's legacy.

Harriet Tubman was born on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in Dorchester County, she left her mark on history as the "conductor" of the Underground Railroad, a suffragist, and humanitarian, yet, the places associated with her life and work are not well known.

Conserving the land that represents her life's work from Dorchester, Maryland to Auburn, New York is not only a respectful way to honor a woman whose commitment to the rights of others was unmatched, but it serves as a meaningful method of preserving our environment, protecting wildlife, and passing a historical legacy onto our children and future generations.

Both Dorchester and Caroline counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore have been active in promoting the Harriet Tubman Trail.

They have jointly developed maps and other resource information through their county tourism offices that serve as a foundation for building the trail, protecting the environment and preserving the legacy.

The National Park Service initiated a Congressionally-directed Special Resource Study in back in 2000. The study concluded that “resources associated with Harriet Tubman in Dorchester, Caroline, and Talbot counties meet the national significance, suitability, feasibility, and need for National Park Service management criteria for eligibility for potential inclusion in the national park system.”

Given these positive findings, this project can become a reality by passing this legislation and moving forward.

My State of Maryland has designated a section of roadways in Dorchester and Caroline counties as the Harriet Tubman Byway. The State is currently seeking federal designation for the route as well and our Governor has committed funding to finance the Harriet Tubman Visitors Center’s design that will serve “as a national model and destination for sustainable and environmentally sensitive buildings.”

In addition to the historic and environmental benefits associated with this project, the legislation also Authorizes \$200,000 for competitive grants to historically black colleges and universities, predominately black institutions, and minority serving institutions to research the life of Harriet Tubman and the African-American experience during her lifetime.

At public meetings held throughout the mid-Atlantic and northeast regions of the trail -- citizens have given their input and shared their knowledge of Harriet Tubman, her achievements, and the environmental impact of designating these lands in her honor. I urge the members of this subcommittee to support this legislation.

Thank you for your time.

