

Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands

[parks](#) - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

Witness Statement

James L. Streeter
Co-Chairman
Avery Point Lighthouse Society

Comments of James L. Streeter before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, and Public lands - H. R. No. 1518 (To Require the Secretary of the Interior to include on the National Register of Historic Places the Avery Point Lighthouse in Groton, Connecticut, and provide \$200,000 for the restoration of that lighthouse.)

Representative Hefley and distinguished members of the Committee.

My name is James L. Streeter and I am a co-founder and co-chairman of the Avery Point Lighthouse Society, known as APLS, a group of local volunteer citizens who are dedicated to saving, restoring and relighting Connecticut's Avery Point Lighthouse.

I would like to thank this Committee for providing the opportunity to publicly present some facts concerning this lighthouse. I would also like to thank Representative Rob Simmons for sponsoring this bill and for his continued support and commitment to this extremely important project.

You have each been provided with a packet giving a brief history of the lighthouse and outlining some of the efforts being made to restore this significantly historic and educational structure.

The Avery Point Lighthouse is located on the University of Connecticut's Avery Point campus in Groton, Connecticut. The 72-acre campus, once the estate of wealthy industrialist Morton B. Plant, was purchased by the State of Connecticut in 1938. The State of Connecticut Quit Claim deeded the property to the United States Government in 1942. The site became the home of the United States Coast Guard Training Station from 1942 through 1967. The University of Connecticut has occupied the site since 1967.

It is interesting to note, the deed for the transfer of the property to the United States Government, stipulated that the [government] "erect and maintain on or over the land ... beacon lights or other buildings and apparatus to be used in aid of navigation".

Thus in March of 1943 the United States Coast Guard fulfilled the requirement of the Quit Claim Deed and construction of the Avery Point Lighthouse was completed. Although it was considered "ready for service" at that time, World War II "hostilities concerns" precluded the light from being lit until May of 1944. The light remained an aid to navigation until it was extinguished in September 1967, when the Coast Guard moved their training facilities to New York.

The Avery Point Lighthouse was the last lighthouse built in the State of Connecticut and [reportedly] is the only lighthouse in the nation built as a memorial to honor the men and women who served as lighthouse

keepers.

Unfortunately over the past twenty years or so, maintenance and upkeep of the lighthouse has been sorely lacking and largely discontinued. The structure now has some serious deterioration problems.

In July of last year, APLS became actively involved in the effort to restore the lighthouse. The group is working closely with representatives of the University of Connecticut at Avery Point as well as staff members of the American Lighthouse Foundation of Wells, Maine, an internationally recognized non-profit organization dedicated to preserving lighthouse history and heritage.

Over the past year our organization has been successful in raising public awareness, support and monies for the restoration effort.

Some of the accomplishments by APLS, since last July include:

- Obtaining in excess of 9,000 signatures on petitions requesting State of Connecticut and Federal governmental funding for the restoration.
- Receiving donations of \$3,000 each from the Governments of the Town and City of Groton.
- Raising in excess of \$25,000 through various fundraising activities, membership drives and sales of lighthouse merchandise.
- Receiving a matching bond grant from the State of Connecticut for the amount of \$150,000.
- Acquiring the (Pro Bono) services of a reputable engineering group to conduct a structural study of the lighthouse.

Costs for the stabilization, restoration and relighting of the structure is estimated to exceed \$300,000. Our organization is committed to its goals and will continue its fundraising activities until the restoration project is complete and the lighthouse becomes part of the overall public access program to the historical and educational resources of Long Island Sound which borders the States of Connecticut, New York and Rhode Island.

The Avery Point Lighthouse Society requests your consideration and support of H.R.1518.

Thank you for your attention and I stand ready to answer any questions.

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