

Chairman Pearce, thank you for the opportunity to be with you today. I greatly appreciate you holding this hearing on legislation to designate the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Watertrail. I would also like to thank, Chairman Pombo and the Resources Committee staff for helping make this hearing possible. I would also like to recognize Pat Noonan's leadership and the Conservation Fund's efforts to establish the Watertrail. Thank you Pat for your work and for your testimony today.

In 1607 Captain John Smith and a small band of Englishmen set foot in North America with the intent of establishing a colony in Virginia. They came expecting gold and quick riches, which they didn't find. Instead they represented the first wave of English colonists that would permanently settle the New World.

Nearly 400 years ago, during the summer of 1608 Captain John Smith and a crew of a dozen men sailed their shallop up the Potomac River past present day Washington, D.C. Smith and his men were exploring the Chesapeake Bay in search of a Northwest Passage.

John Smith explored most of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries between 1607 and 1609. Smith and his crew mapped and explored nearly 3,000 miles of the Chesapeake Bay. His maps (on display) and writings influenced exploration and settlement in the New World for over a century.

It is through Smith's writings that we learn a great deal about the Native Americans who inhabited the Bay. Captain Smith's interaction with Chief Powhatan and other Indian tribes marked the beginning of a tumultuous relationship between the colonists and the Native inhabitants.

The National Park Service recently transmitted the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Study to Congress, stating that the trail meets the criteria for designation. The study recommends and I heartily support federal designation as a national historic trail. The national significance of Smith's voyages in my mind is unquestionable. The trail also represents a unique opportunity for public recreation. Every year, millions of people enjoy the natural resources of the Bay. The Watertrail will guide modern day explorers' intent on retracing Smith's voyages of discovery.

In Virginia we are busy preparing for the 400 th Anniversary of America's founding at Jamestown. Part of the commemoration hopefully will include the designation of the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Bay National Historic Watertrail. Designation of the Watertrail represents an excellent opportunity to recognize the historical significance of Jamestown, John Smith and the early settlement of the New World.

I'm proud and honored to represent Virginia's 1 st Congressional District (or as I like to call it, America's First Congressional District) which spans most of the Bay's western boarder. The James, York and Rappahannock Rivers, three of the Bay's major rivers, flow through my district. The Bay and the tributaries have shaped and continue to shape the lives of the residents of Virginia, especially in my district.

Excitement and support for the Watertrail stretches across the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Bay community, including the Governors, Congressional delegation, county governments, non-profit organizations and many others would like to commemorate Smith's voyages as a National Historic Trail.

If John Smith sailed by Washington D.C. today, I'd bet he would be surprised to see the changes. As the 400 th Anniversary of the first permanent settlement in the new world approaches, I believe it is fitting that Congress recognizes and designates the Captain John Smith Chesapeake Bay National Historic Watertrail.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you today and for holding this hearing.