

Congressman Tom Davis  
Testimony before the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans  
December 6, 2005

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman, Representative Pallone and Members of the Subcommittee. I am honored to testify today regarding H.R. 3082, a bill to rename the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge after Elizabeth Hartwell.

For almost 20 years, Mrs. Hartwell spearheaded efforts to protect Mason Neck area. Her efforts led to the establishment of the 2,277-acre Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, the 1,804-acre Mason Neck State Park and the 1,003 acre Pohick Bay Regional Park.

Mrs. Hartwell began her environmental crusade in February 1965 when she learned of a rezoning application in Fairfax County for the development of a satellite city of 20,000 people on the most ecologically sensitive area of Mason Neck. She decided to lead an effort to stop this development and to preserve the Mason Neck habitat for the endangered American bald eagle. During the ensuing weeks and months, she organized a watchdog group called the Conservation Committee for Mason Neck. She made films of the wildlife that thrived there to show to other civic organizations around the region. Mrs. Hartwell even gave tours by boat along Mason Neck's waterways and enlisted the support of environmental organizations at the local, regional, state and federal level.

The Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1969 for the protection of nesting, feeding, and roosting habitat for bald eagles. It was the first federal refuge established specifically for the then-endangered bald eagle. Today there are multiple nests on the refuge and on neighboring public and private lands.

Mrs. Hartwell's efforts to protect the environment were rewarded with dozens of honors and awards. In 1976, Mrs. Hartwell was named the Virginia Wildlife Federation Conservationist of the Year. In 1990, she won the Fairfax County Park Authority's Elly Doyle Park Service Award.

I am pleased to support the efforts of several Mason Neck area homeowners associations to rename the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge in honor of Mrs. Hartwell who passed away on December 14, 2000. She dedicated her life to nature and helping the environment and it would be a fitting tribute to rename the refuge after the woman who fought so valiantly for its creation