

STATEMENT  
OF  
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BEFORE THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
NATIONAL PARKS FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS SUBCOMMITTEE  
SEPTEMBER 15, 2011  
CONCERNING:

H.R. 2336, THE YORK RIVER WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY ACT OF 2011

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony and to share with you the importance of the York River to the York School Department.

Seeking the designation of the York River for study under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act has the full and enthusiastic support of the York School Department. The York River provides an instructional venue for new and valuable learning experiences about the river's natural, historic, and cultural resources.

The opportunity for student involvement through the curricular areas of science, technology, social studies and service learning through a Wild and Scenic River Study of the York River aligns perfectly with the York School Department's Strategic Plan and our commitment to promote opportunities for students to be active citizens who are engaged in learning experiences based on real life applications. We recognize the need to motivate and prepare our students for career opportunities in the 21st Century through these inquiry-based practices, and appreciate the expanded connections with community organizations that a Wild and Scenic River Study would provide for our schools.

Our community partnerships in York are long-standing and include many of the organizations that would be involved in the study. The Museums of Old York, the York Rivers Association, the York Land Trust, the York Public Library and the York Rotary Club have worked closely with the schools in programs that have been highly beneficial to our students and our faculty.

Participating in the Wild and Scenic River Study will provide our staff with expanded educational resources and assist them in designing learning experiences that will benefit the community. Surveys, monitoring, presentations and the use of technological tools to conduct experiments are all instructional activities that will make lessons exciting and allow teachers to grow professionally as they collaborate with community members who

share their expertise. The support of these local community “experts” will benefit both students and teachers.

The York School Department currently uses the resources of the York River as an important part of its curriculum. Students in Kindergarten through Grade Three participate in Coastal Studies units designed to expose them to scientific inquiry using the York River as their “laboratory.” In Grade One, York High School Advanced Placement students and their teacher design and implement a unit on the York River estuary system. In Grade Three, students research the local animals that reside in the York River watershed and in Grade Four students explore the geographical features of the York River area. In Grade Five, students conduct research on the vernal pools in the York River area and the resulting data is used by the York Land Trust to advocate for responsible development in the York River watershed area. In Grade Six, students participate in a unit on Natives of Maine, with a focus on the historical importance of the York River to the local Native American population. In Grade Seven, students learn about the ecosystems, habitats and ecological niches of the York River and in Grade Eight, students are engaged in the Gulf of Maine Research Institute project, conducting water sampling to monitor pollution in the York River.

The York River continues to be an important resource for our high school students as well, whose teachers have been trained in the use of Pasco probes to conduct both biological and chemical testing of the York River water. One example of cross-school collaboration is the partnership between the High School Advanced Biology class and the First Grade classes. High School Biology students create touch tanks, simulations of the estuary, and provide hands-on guided opportunities for first graders to develop an understanding of the importance of the York River to our community and our environment.

The attached testimony packet contains images of our students engaged in real-life applied learning experiences that are part of the York School’s adopted curriculum. Curriculum documentation samples are also included with links to the York Schools website.

As you consider H.R. 2336, and the designation of the York River for study under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, please consider the vital role that the York River plays in the young minds of our community and the leaders of tomorrow.



First Graders learn about York River ecology through touch tank lessons designed by High School Biology students.



Students collect data on the York River using GPS devices.



York students learn and teach about the York River estuary system.



York students learn about the ecology of the York River watershed.



Students learn about York River ecology through hands-on lessons.



Volunteers gather data on the water quality in the York River.





York Middle School Grade 8 students collect and analyze York River water samples as part of a research project for the Gulf of Maine Research Institute.



York students learn about the rich history of the York River.

Link to Slide Show of York River and Gulf of Maine collaborative project involving Grade 8 students: <http://www.yorkschoools.org/~qmoy/VitalsignWEB4.mov>

Link to K-8 Curriculum Brochures: Each grade level has a curricular component that includes the York River as a resource in either Science or Social Studies:  
<http://www.yorkschoools.org/Curriculum/Curriculum%20Brochures>

Documentation of York's curriculum with alignment to the Maine Learning Results:  
<http://www.yorkschoools.org/Curriculum/Curriculum%20Alignment>