

**STATEMENT OF SHEILA RABB WEIDENFELD, CHAIR CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK COMMISSION BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND PUBLIC LANDS, OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 6111, TO AMEND THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL DEVELOPMENT ACT AND EXTEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK COMMISSION.**

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2010**

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Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to testify in support of H.R. 6111 which would amend Public Law 91-664, the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Development Act, by extending the life of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Commission for 10 more years.

For nearly 40 years the Commission's 19 members, nominated by local jurisdictions and appointed by the Secretary, have met to consult and advise the Secretary of Interior or the Secretary's designee on general policies and specific matters related to the development and administration of the national park. Commission members provide an important service to the Secretary, bringing issues and concerns to the attention of the National Park Service, and advising on how best to realize the intentions of Congress, as expressed in the park's enabling legislation.

The Commission's original authorization was for a ten-year period. However, because of its value to the National Park Service and the unique nature of the park, legislation has passed three previous times extending the Commission's term to the current forty years. Over the past 39 years no other changes have been made to the direction or composition of the Commission. I encourage your support of this Bill to extend the life of this commission.

The establishment of the Advisory Commission on January 8, 1971 stemmed in part from the unique nature of the Canal. It is unlike most areas administered by the National Park Service as it runs along a 185 mile stretch of river shoreline and is flanked by the nation's capital, suburban communities and numerous small rural towns.

Recently, Carrie Johnson, staff aide to U.S. Senator Charles Mathias Jr. who worked with Senator Mathias and U.S. Representative Gilbert Gude on the legislation described the genesis of the idea of the Commission. She wrote:

“The idea of a locally-oriented advisory panel originated in the Canal park bills proposed by Representative, then Senator, Charles McC. Mathias Jr. and Rep. Gilbert Gude in the 1960s.”

She went on to say:

“Messrs. Mathias and Gude emphasized that a new Canal park in such a sensitive location would need to communicate and collaborate especially well with its neighbors. They saw an advisory panel as a key vehicle for that. The commission they proposed had a carefully balanced composition and a very strong local-state base. It included eight members representing the Maryland counties, with two to be appointed by each county's governing board; eight representing Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia, with two appointed by each Governor and the D.C. Mayor; and three including the chairman, appointed at large by the Secretary of the Interior. The at-large seats were intended to provide broader perspectives and enable the Secretary to respond to suggestions from Congress and national conservation groups.”

She summarized by saying:

“The commission has been more active, and the NPS more hospitable to it, than many expected at first. The benefits of this partnership, from Cumberland, Maryland to the Tide lock in Georgetown, District of Columbia, have fully justified both the local-state-federal structure of the commission and Congress' decisions to extend its life.”

Carrie Johnson was right.

The Commission, the National Park Service and the numerous communities and residents along the canal's tremendous length have worked well together; perhaps even more so in recent years as the economic benefits of heritage and recreation tourism have been realized.

Washington County Commission President John Barr recently wrote me saying:

“The C&O Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission is an integral part of Washington County, Maryland. The Commission has supported many local projects to help better our County and citizens.”

“The Washington County Commissioners strongly support the reauthorization of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission before the January 8, 2011 expiration date. The Washington County Commissioners also support the current structure of the Advisory Commission and the ability for county governments, including Washington County, to recommend two members to the Commission.”

Frederick County Commission President Jan Gardner recently wrote me as well saying:

“I am writing on behalf of the Frederick County board of County commissioners to express our strong support for the extension of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal

National Historical Park Advisory Commission and the continuation of the current commission membership and structure.”

“The C&O Canal National Historical Park is a valued historical, cultural, educational and recreational resource for Frederick County. The Commission has successfully served as an effective and efficient venue for listening to local concerns and park users, to collect helpful advice in developing the General Plan for the park and most importantly has served as a conduit ensuring long-term citizen engagement.”

Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members:

- The Commission brings together, in a formal forum, representatives of the nine million residents who live in the 3 states and the District of Columbia, as well as 13 counties and dozens of cities, towns and communities near the canal.
- The Commission serves as an important venue for addressing community and individual concerns and provides a venue for active listening to all sides of an issue.
- The Commission hears statements on a full range of administrative and development issues facing the communities and the park and makes recommendations that account for the best interests of all parties.
- At its quarterly meetings, the Commission reviews dozens of briefing statements, which represent a wide range of park operations, projects and issues, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- The Commission listens to concerns and issues of traditional users, private in-holders and fish and game clubs and has recommended NPS work creatively to resolve their issues fairly and in a timely manner.
- The Commission reviews the park’s priorities to ensure they are consistent with approved plans.

For the past 39 years the C&O Canal National Historical Park Commission has performed a valuable service in advising the NPS in the administration and development of the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

The unique nature of the national park clearly warrants the need for a commission that gives voice to those who live, work and recreate along the canal. Just as the hard work of managing the C&O Canal National Historical Park will not end on January 8, 2011, the public engagement, and need for accountability and transparency should not end either.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of both the sitting members of the Commission and their nominating bodies we strongly recommend enactment of H.R.\_\_\_\_\_.

This completes my prepared comments concerning H.R.\_\_\_\_\_ I will be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.



Sheila Weidenfeld <sheila.weidenfeld@gmail.com>

## C&O Canal Commission background

5 messages

Carrie3219@aol.com <Carrie3219@aol.com>

Mon, Aug 9, 2010 at 6:29 PM

To: sheila.weidenfeld@gmail.com

Dear Sheila,

After our conversation, I dug out some files to bolster my recollection of the legislative history bearing on the composition of the C&O Canal NHP Commission.

The idea of a locally-oriented advisory panel originated in the Canal park bills proposed by Representative, then Senator, Charles McC. Mathias Jr. and Rep. Gilbert Gude in the 1960s. They knew that public support for preserving the canal was diluted by concerns, especially upriver, about a larger federal presence along the Potomac and possible loss of access to the towpath and the Potomac shore. Those concerns grew louder after the Johnson administration unveiled its ambitious Potomac National River plan in 1967. Moreover, the Maryland counties and communities through which the canal runs had not always enjoyed warm relations with NPS, and sought assurances that the new, thin national historical park would be a good neighbor with congenial management.

Messrs. Mathias and Gude emphasized that a new Canal park in such a sensitive location would need to communicate and collaborate especially well with its neighbors. They saw an advisory panel as a key vehicle for that. The commission they proposed had a carefully balanced composition and a very strong local-state base. It included eight members representing the Maryland counties, with two to be appointed by each county's governing board; eight representing Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and D.C., with two appointed by each Governor (or the D.C. Mayor); and three (or in one version, five), including the chairman, appointed at large by the Secretary of the Interior. The at-large seats were intended to provide broader perspectives and enable the Secretary to respond to suggestions from Congress and national conservation groups. The commission was to be permanent, with no expiration date.

When the Canal legislation finally began to move through Congress in 1970, the Interior Department insisted on changes in several provisions, including the commission section. As I recall, the concept of advisory panels for specific parks was less accepted in NPS then, and the department was disinclined to give even an advisory cachet to local and state appointees. Thus as a compromise, the final legislation (PL 91-664) provided for appointments of the 16 local and state representatives by the Secretary from recommendations submitted by the counties and states. It also limited the Commission's lifespan to ten years. Messrs. Mathias and Gude accepted these changes, however reluctantly, because the basic advisory structure remained in the law.

In my view, experience since 1971 has proved the wisdom of this approach. The commission has been more active, and NPS more hospitable to it, than many expected at first. The benefits of this partnership, from Cumberland to Tidelock, have fully justified both the local-state-federal structure of the commission and Congress' decisions to extend its life.

I hope this summary is helpful and will be glad to provide copies of key documents from 1969-70 (now that I have found them) on request.

Sincerely,

carrie

Carrie Johnson  
Legislative assistant to Sen. Mathias (1965-72)  
Chairman, C&O Canal NHP Commission (1981-86)  
3219 1st St N.  
Arlington VA 22201



## BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

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September 9, 2010

Sheila R. Weidenfeld  
Chairperson  
C & O Canal National Historical Park Commission  
3059 Q Street NW  
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Ms. Weidenfeld,

I am writing on behalf of the Frederick County Board of County Commissioners to express our strong support for the extension of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission (Commission) and the continuation of the current commission membership and structure. The Commission has been in place for nearly 40 years and has been successful in bringing issues and concerns from the communities along the Canal to the attention of the National Park Service and in advising the Secretary of Interior on how to best realize the initial intentions of Congress related to the management, preservation, and development of the Park.

The C & O Canal National Historical Park is a valued historical, cultural, educational, and recreational resource for Frederick County. The Commission has successfully served as an effective and efficient venue to listen to local concerns and park users, to collect helpful advice in developing the General Plan for the Park, and most importantly has served as a conduit ensuring long-term citizen engagement. The idea of a locally-oriented advisory panel originated in legislation proposed by then Senator Mac C. Mathias and Rep. Gilbert Gude who recognized that public support was essential for preserving the canal and maintaining long-term relationships with the National Park Service. The involvement of locally recommended membership on the Commission has been extremely effective and has demonstrated the wisdom of this approach.

Currently eight of the 19 members of the Commission are appointed by the Secretary with recommendations submitted by the Boards of Commissioners of Frederick, Washington, and Allegheny Counties in Maryland and the County Council of Montgomery County, Maryland. The role of these members is to represent the interests of the county and to assure the concerns and desires of Frederick County residents, municipalities, and elected officials are known and given fair consideration by the Commission as it advises the National Park Service. Through the involvement and commitment of these local Frederick County representatives on the Advisory Commission, there have been successful efforts to preserve the Monocacy Aqueduct and restore the Catoctin Aqueduct, both initiated by Frederick County commission members. These efforts have actively engaged the public including private contributions toward the restoration of the

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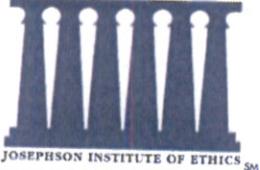
Ronald A. Hart  
*County Manager*

Barry L. Stanton  
*Assistant County Manager*

Joyce M. Grossnickle  
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*Public Information Officer*

### CHARACTER COUNTS!



TRUSTWORTHINESS • RESPECT  
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CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six

Sheila R. Weidenfeld  
September 9, 2010  
Page Two

there have been successful efforts to preserve the Monocacy Aqueduct and restore the Catoctin Aqueduct, both initiated by Frederick County commission members. These efforts have actively engaged the public including private contributions toward the completion of these projects.

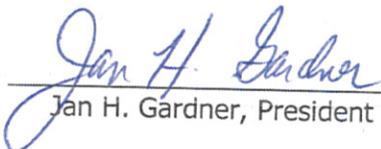
As the Advisory Commission is now constituted, Frederick County is able to designate two individual to represent the County on the Commission. Through this representation, Frederick County is assured that its concerns and desires are heard. Congress has long recognized the value of the Advisory Commission as it is currently constituted by its reauthorization, unchanged, on three previous occasions.

The Frederick County Commissioners strongly support the reauthorization of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission before the January 8, 2011 expiration date. The Frederick County Commissioners also actively urge no change to the make-up of the Advisory Commission and seek to continue the long-standing ability for Frederick County and other county governments to recommend two members to the Commission. Any effort to usurp this local role is ill advised.

Thank you very much for your good work on the Commission and for your interest and effort in sharing the views of the Frederick County Board of County Commissioners.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

By:   
Jan H. Gardner, President

JHG/lf

cc: Senator Ben Cardin  
Senator Barbara Mikulski  
Congressman Roscoe Bartlett  
Congressman Chris Van Hollen  
Board of County Commissioners  
Ronald A. Hart, County Manager  
Joyce Grossnickle, Administrative Officer, Office of the County Manager  
Reading File



**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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**John F. Barr, *President***  
**Terry L. Baker, *Vice-President***  
**Kristin B. Aleshire**  
**James F. Kercheval**  
**William J. Wivell**

September 10, 2010

Sheila R. Weidenfeld  
Chairperson  
C & O Canal National Historical Park Commission  
3059 Q Street NW  
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Ms. Weidenfeld,

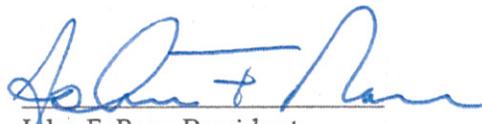
I am writing on behalf of the Washington County Board of County Commissioners to express our strong support for the extension of the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission and the continuation of the current commission membership and structure.

The C & O Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission is an integral part of Washington County, Maryland. The Commission has supported many local projects to help better our County and our citizens.

The Washington County Commissioners strongly support the reauthorization of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission before the January 8, 2011 expiration date. The Washington County Commissioners also support the current structure of the Advisory Commission and the ability for county governments, including Washington County, to recommend two members to the Commission.

Thank you for your tremendous work on the Commission and for your interest and effort in sharing the views of Washington County Board of County Commissioners.

Sincerely,



John F. Barr, President  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

C: Greg Murray, Washington County Administrator