

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands

Witness Statement

Testimony by Rep. Gilman

Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands

June 13, 1999

I Want to First Thank My Friend and Colleague, Chairman Hansen, And Ranking Member Romero-Barcelo for Affording Me this Opportunity to Testify Today.

Mr. Chairman, as You May Know, in 1978, along with Our Good Friend and Colleague Joe McDade, I Introduced Federal Legislation Establishing the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River as a Component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

At the Beginning of this Congress I Introduced Legislation to Establish a Monguap Visitor Center Which Would Become the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River's Primary Visitor Facility.

[Currently the Site Proposed for this Visitor Center Is Owned by The State of New York's Department of Environmental Conservation. The Property Was Acquired by the State in 1990 as Part of a Much Larger Purchase of an 11,000-acre Tract Intended to Provide Habitat for a Population of Wintering Bald Eagles. New York State Legislation Authorizing Federal Development of the Property as a Visitor Center by Means of a Long-term Lease Was Passed in 1993. A Legislative Support Data Package Was Prepared in 1994 for Federal Legislation Authorizing Development of the Site, To Appropriate Funds for Development and to Increase the Upper Delaware's Operational Base to Provide for Year-round Operation]

The Site for the Monguap Visitor Center Contains Abundant Natural and Cultural Resources and this Proposal Will Identify and Develop Strategies to Protect the Monguap Area's Natural Resources, Including: the Expanding Bald Eagle Population; the Half Million Migrating American Shad; 200 Species of Birds; Upland and Flood Plain Forest; Hemlock and Laurel Gorges; and a Mile of River Front with Natural Sand Beaches.

The Visitor Center Will Benefit the Community in Many Respects. It Will Serve as an Educational Asset, a Local Museum, a Class Room And as a Driving Force in Promotion of the Natural and Historical Resources of the Region. Moreover, with 85% of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River under Private Ownership, the Region Struggles to Maintain a Balance Between Private Property and Recreation.

Bordered by the Delaware River, the Monguap River and New York State Highway Route 97, the Visitors Center Would Provide a Central Location to Promote All the Services and Natural Beauty the Region Has to Offer. The Only Center of its Kind Within an Hour's Drive Of New York, the Monguap Visitors Center Would Open the Upper Delaware Valley to Both the Local and Visiting Public.

The National Park Service Has Been Overseeing this Area for Twenty Years, Without a Base of Operations. The State of New York Has Dedicated Funding to Purchase the Land for the Project, Upgrade River Services, and Restore the Bald Eagle Population to the Region. As the Final Element of the River Management Plan, the Citizens of the Upper Delaware Valley Have Been Patient, Waiting for this Long Overdue Project to Begin.

Mr. Chairman, I Would Also like to Include with My Remarks, Testimonials of Support from New York State Senator John Bonacic, New York State Assemblyman Jacob Gunther, and the Director of Orange County Tourism, Susan Cayea.

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