

# **Committee on Resources**

## **Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands**

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### **Witness Statement**

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**Testimony in Support of H.R. 20 - "Mongaup**

**Visitor Center Act of 1999"**

**by Bernard T. Kozykowski, R.A., A.I.A.**

**Former Chairman of the Upper Delaware Citizens**

**Advisory Council**

**before the House Resources Subcommittee on National**

**Parks and Public Lands**

**Hon. James V. Hansen, Chairman July 13, 1999**

Mr.Chairman and Honorable Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for providing me with this opportunity to address this committee with regard to H.R. 20 - "Mongaup Visitor Center Act of 1999," a bill before you that seeks authorization for the Secretary of the Interior to construct and operate a visitor's center for the Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River on lands owned by the State of New York.

I appear before you today both personally and professionally in support of H.R. 20. My curriculum vitae has been provided to this committee in advance of this testimony for the record.

I am a native of the Delaware River valley, having lived the majority of my life in the Middle and Upper Delaware. My home is located along a tributary of the river on lands adjacent to the Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River corridor at Barryville, NY. I maintain a professional practice in Architecture and Planning near the river at Port Jervis, NY.

My interests in the Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River are admittedly influenced by my personal experiences growing up in the valley and tempered, hopefully, by my professional experience and background. I have been a part of the reshaping of the valley for over fifty years.

My first recollection of the changes that would redefine the character of the river valley was the reduced flow of water in the Delaware resulting from the impoundment of its headwaters for a reservoir system for the City of New York. By the time I reached adulthood this thinking had extended itself downstream. It was proposed that the entire Middle Delaware be engulfed to the benefit of the communities of the Lower Delaware. Tens of thousands of acres of land were subsequently taken by the government, during which

time the futility of that kind of thinking was recognized. That land remains today, less its people, as the seventy-thousand acre Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. As an adult, I later experienced yet another change that would again alter the character of the river valley. Conservationists, exclusive of the Upper Delaware, proposed that this part of the river become subject to the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

To the residents of the Upper Delaware this proposal, at best, appeared ominous. Previous experiences with the New York City reservoirs, and Middle Delaware, did anything but provide favorable example. Adverse pressure from negative economic changes intensified local resistance. Even local conservationists expressed serious concern. Nonetheless, a common thread was woven through all of this. It was the realization, by all, that the Upper Delaware is indeed a very precious natural and cultural resource worthy of special, if not unique, consideration.

With this realization and the lessons of the past, the communities of the Upper Delaware, working in concert with the Secretary of the Interior, the Upper Delaware Citizens Advisory Council, the National Park Service, the State of New York, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Delaware River Basin Commission, developed and then implemented a community based initiative known as the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Management Plan that included a newly formed Upper Delaware Council. This cooperative strategy serves as a model of the partnering between governments that is required if we are to effectively manage our natural and cultural resources in the next century.

My testimony before this committee today is fundamentally based upon the value of the partnering strategy of the river management plan and the need to see it through to fruition in its most complete sense. My personal experiences as a native of the Middle and Upper Delaware might well have provided otherwise. However, it is my professional sense, respecting and understanding those experiences, that caused me to recognize the remarkable worth of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River and its unique river management plan.

It is my belief in what had been accomplished under this plan, and what remains to be done, that encouraged me to represent the Secretary of the Interior on the Upper Delaware Citizens Advisory Council and serve as its Chairman, to serve as a delegate from my town on the Upper Delaware Council, to voluntarily negotiate the difficult acquisition of the property for the National Park Service south district ranger station, and, appear here before you today. Such efforts are required of all of us if we are to truly succeed. The towns along the Upper Delaware have, one-by-one, been redesigning their master plans and zoning ordinances so as to be in conformance with the river management plan. So too are their respective county governments. The governors of the State of Pennsylvania and the State of New York have issued executive orders directing conformance with the river management plan. Each state is currently studying some form of financial support for the upper Delaware. This support is clearly evident in the language of H.R. 20. This uncommon presence of purpose has transcended every level of government in the formation of this unique community based partnership whose goal is to effectively manage the natural and cultural resources of the Upper Delaware.

Having offered all of this, it is my personal and professional belief that all of this will be for naught unless the river management plan is seen through to completion.

The Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River Management Plan is perceived as a contract between various levels of government including the people of the Upper Delaware and the visiting public. This agreement sets forth a plan to responsibly manage the natural and cultural resources of the Upper Delaware. The stipulations of the management plan require the complete cooperation of all parties to the agreement,

including the United States Government.

Interestingly, it is the local communities of the Upper Delaware that are leading the way in fulfilling their obligations under this agreement. These are the very towns that were "up in arms" at the slightest suggestion of a National Park in the Upper Delaware just a short time ago.

The adjoining states of Pennsylvania and New York, and the Delaware River Basin Commission have been remarkably active members of the Upper Delaware Council from the outset. The National Park Service unit in the Upper Delaware represents this cooperative effort at its best.

H.R. 20, the bill presently before you, authorizing the construction and operation of a visitor's center for the Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River, addresses the single most important public facility identified in the river management plan.

It is my professional belief that the visitor's center will represent the essence of this new partnership between governments, the local community, and the public. The visitor's center in the most obvious sense will be the gateway to the seventy-three mile long Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River. It is envisioned that it will stand, in partnership with the states, as a truly unique educational facility for the visiting public and local communities. Its emphasis will be on education and understanding the natural and cultural resources of the Upper Delaware. In addition to unique features of the river corridor, special programs will focus on the adjacent twelve thousand acre NYS Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area; wintering area for the largest American bald eagle population in the eastern United States. Other programs will address the unique partnering aspects of the Upper Delaware River Management Plan which today serves as an effective model for future cooperative resource management areas. Another program will define the important differences that exist between the public and private lands of the Upper Delaware.

All of this is still just a recommendation on paper, professionally sound, but nonetheless just a recommendation - until favorably acted upon by this subcommittee. No one yet truly knows how far idea can be pursued. No one truly knows what it will cost. We have some guidance in the stipulations set forth by the State of New York in its consent agreement to provide the land; nothing more. Anything else is pure speculation until the visitor's center is authorized and it's design completed. All that we do know is that the need for a visitor's center was recognized twenty years ago as an essential element of the Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River. No more can be known, nor can anymore be said, until the next step; which can only be taken by this subcommittee.

Therefore, on behalf of those of us who know and believe in the future of the Upper Delaware, I ask that you act favorably upon H.R. 20 in furtherance the river management plan.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to address this subcommittee, in support of H.R. 20.