

Testimony of Cate Magennis Wyatt

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On H.R. 5195, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Act of 2006

Before the House Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands

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Chairman Pearce, Ranking Member Christensen, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Cate Magennis Wyatt. I am the President of The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership and I appreciate the invitation to present testimony on behalf of House Bill 5195, the "Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Act of 2006." I have served in government, as the Secretary of Commerce and Trade for the Commonwealth of Virginia, in the private sector as a developer and in the non-profit sector as a trustee on numerous Boards.

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership (the "Partnership") is a 10 year old grassroots organization with over 150 Partners, which has worked with the National Park Service over this period to raise national awareness of, interpretive educational programs for, and civic engagement in, the unparalleled history within the region that generally follows the Old Carolina Road (Rt. 15/231) from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania through Frederick, Maryland, ending at Monticello in Albemarle County in Virginia. This area includes land in thirteen counties and four states. In September 2006, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area Feasibility Study was completed ("Feasibility Study"). Appendix A to the Feasibility Study is a map of the Heritage Area, which is attached to this Testimony as Attachment A. This area includes parts of : Adams County (PA); Frederick County (MD); Jefferson County (WV); Loudoun County (VA); Prince William County (VA); Fauquier County (VA); Culpeper County (VA); Rappahannock County (VA); Orange County (VA); Spotsylvania County (VA); Madison County (VA); Greene County (VA); and Albemarle County (VA).

I. H.R. 5195

House Bill 5195 was introduced in April 2006 by Congressman Frank Wolf, representing the 10 th District of Virginia, and the bill is currently sponsored by twenty additional House Members representing districts in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The Partnership is extremely grateful for the leadership that Congressman Wolf has taken on this important legislation.

The bill would establish the area within the proposed boundary as the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (hereinafter, "Heritage Area"). This region has been described by renowned Yale University historian C. Vann Woodward as follows:

"This part of the country has soaked up more of the blood, sweat, and tears of American history than any other part of the country. It has bred more founding fathers, inspired more soaring hopes and ideals and witnessed more triumphs, failures, victories, and lost causes than any other place in the country."

And, by author and noted Revolutionary War authority Richard Ketchum, as:

"If any land in America deserves to be called Hallowed Ground, it is this red clay soil on which so much of this nation's past is preserved."

Inhabited hundreds of years ago by the Iroquois and Susquehanna Native Americans, this region was traveled by European trappers and frontiersmen who ventured to the wilderness to find a means to create a living. Young surveyor George Washington laid the plans for the town of Culpeper, never envisioning that it would later be engulfed by the largest Calvary battle of the Civil War, the battle of Brandy Station.

In June 1755, the onset of the French and Indian War, Major General Edward Braddock led troops from Virginia across this region to attack the French fort in what is now Cumberland, Maryland. Had those battles gone differently, had not the young soldiers gave of their lives, we very well might be speaking French.

Twenty years later, a collection of British citizens, by the names of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe, risked their lives and

their livelihoods to wage a war against their own sovereign nation and, in retrospect, audaciously sought to create a grand dream called democracy. As we read through their journals and have the benefit of their thoughts, they did not always agree on how to create this country, nor on what this notion, "Democracy", should look like in law. As they traveled between their homes and to Philadelphia, the natural resources along the Journey served to inspire them. Jefferson wrote in his journal, as he observed the confluence of the Potomac, that it invites you "as it were, from the riot and tumult roaring around, to pass through the breach and participate in the calm below" (Thomas Jefferson, Notes of the State of Virginia).

During the Revolutionary War, this corridor served as headquarters to Generals Wayne, Lafayette, and Muhlenberg, each of whom exhibited bravery and leadership in the face of daunting odds. In 1859, John Brown led his men through the region as he planned and executed his attack on Harper's Ferry in the name of freedom for all.

A mere 80 years after the Revolution, this very land absorbed the loss of blood, dreams and lives with more Civil War battles waged on it than any other region in the country. There were more lives lost on this land than in the history of this country as young men laid everything they had on the line and brave women like Clara Barton administered as best they could. Among others who risked everything, were the slaves who ran in the hopes of finding freedom and the Quaker towns and abolitionist who harbored them along their way.

During the War of 1812, as Washington was burning, Dolly Madison sent a fearless team to secretly steal away the documents of democracy to private homes in this region for safe keeping.

This is the land that gave respite to Presidents Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, Kennedy and Eisenhower and where General George Marshall found solace in the only home he ever owned, as he said, "after 41 years of wandering" -- a home where he could contemplate The Marshall Plan, which exported the ideals of Democracy to Europe. A listing of the great variety of historic resources within the proposed Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area is included in the Feasibility Study.

It was through these hills and along this corridor that *they* all led by example and left their indelible mark on the creation of America. Some made it their home, others their grave, and by each deliberate contribution, they created these United States.

In his Gettysburg Address on November 19, 1863, Lincoln spoke to the nation when he said:

" We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that (this) nation might live.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. "

Distinguished Members of the Committee, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership is here today to ensure that not only do we not *detract*, but that we work diligently to extract the lessons in leadership and celebrate the landscape that has inspired generations to fight for the evocative ideals of democracy. National designation for the Heritage Area, as further explained below, will bring numerous benefits to the region and help ensure that our children and grandchildren are able to walk in the footprints of those who gave their lives to give us this nation.

II. The Role of the Partnership as Management Entity within the Heritage Area

H.R. 5195 designates the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership, a non-profit organization based in Waterford, Virginia, as the management entity for the Heritage Area and outlines the Partnership's duties and authorities in Section 5 of the bill. The Partnership is a bi-partisan, public-private initiative that works collaboratively with heritage sites, elected officials, business leaders, educators, landowners, preservationists, and destination marketing organizations to celebrate the cultural heritage in this region.

Considerable thought was given to the creation of this Partnership. First, an Advisory Council was created which includes: the Presidents of Monticello, the Civil War Preservation Trust, the Eisenhower Institute, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Protect Historic America, among others. Early counsel was sought from the National Heritage Area Program Director and the President of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas. A full listing of the Board of Trustees and Advisors is included as Attachment B to this Testimony.

Next, a Board of Trustees was convened and includes professionals in the fields of heritage conservation, interpretation, tourism, and representatives from the business sector. This Board takes seriously its responsibilities. It has raised

significant private funds to execute its 2005-2007 management plan with time-specific performance schedules and cost benefit analysis for funds expended. The money raised thus far has enabled the Partnership to fund the Feasibility Study, which has been reviewed and determined by the National Park Service to meet the federal criteria for heritage area designation. Section 5(b) of the bill authorizes the development of a Heritage Area management plan by the Partnership and authorizes the use of federal funds to develop and implement that plan within the Heritage Area. The current management entity has demonstrated fiscal responsibility and best management practices. The Partnership is well-equipped to serve as the managing entity for the Heritage Area and to oversee the implementation of the management plan. The Partnership has been working with the National Park Service for nearly ten years to advance the Heritage Area concept for this region, as demonstrated by the National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary which was placed online by the National Park Service in 2000, which can be viewed at: www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/journey.

Over the past ten years, the Partnership has worked diligently to build a strong network of local, regional and national partners to develop a common vision for the conservation and enhancement of the historic, recreational, cultural, and natural characteristics of the region. Over 100 community briefings have been given, in addition to twenty full-day or two-day workshops held within the four (4) states each of which convened stakeholders from the community. A list of numerous Community Workshops and Partners meetings held between March 2004 and March 2006 is included in the Feasibility Study and included as Attachment C to this Testimony. In addition, to date there have been 74 Resolutions in support of the Heritage Area that have been passed by local governments and community organizations within the Heritage Area, a sampling of these can be found within Appendix B-1 to the Feasibility Study.

The Partnership has developed a committee structure with the establishment of the several standing committees, including Economic Development and Education Subcommittees. As a result, the Partnership has created a highly successful education outreach program to reach students and teachers within the region as well as across the nation. Some of these programs include: a two week summer camp for middle school children which is specifically designed to increase civic engagement and teach leadership skills; elementary school activity books and scavenger hunts; middle school field trips, and a college level course taught at the Community College, which provides teacher accreditation credits.

Our Destination Marketing committee has already produced tools to encourage increased awareness of the region's natural and cultural heritage with the production of: *The JTHG Travel Guide* book, visitor center maps, visitor brochures and a website designed to make it easy to "take the Journey". Each effort is focused on supporting economic development opportunities, through regional branding and cooperative marketing, in communities throughout the Heritage Area. Finally, the Partnership has been working with local, state and national officials to create a National Scenic Byway to supplement the Heritage Area designation that will help sustain and strengthen the economy, the cultural heritage and the quality of life in the region. Heritage area designation will ensure that the Partnership and its collective members can continue their active work as the official management entity for the Heritage Area.

III. Specific Benefits of Heritage Area Designation for the Region

The Partnership and its members are seeking designation of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground as a national heritage area because it will provide operational funding and National Park Service support for the Partnership and its members to work collaboratively with business leaders, heritage sites, elected officials, preservationists, destination marketing organizations, citizens, and a variety of community-based organizations to create interpretation programs and to promote the history and tourism opportunities within the Heritage Area. To date, all operational funds for The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership have been provided through private philanthropic donations, which will continue as the initiative moves forward.

Importantly, the region will also benefit from national recognition due to the association it confers with the National Park Service through the use of the NPS arrowhead symbol as a branding strategy, a symbol so familiar to most travelers. Local economies benefit by the increased heritage tourism, which is of particular benefit to the 15 Main Street Communities and historic downtowns within the JTHG Corridor, each of which is a partner and each of which has worked diligently to maintain their cultural heritage.

Although tourism is the first, second or third largest industry in each region within The Journey Through Hallowed Ground, the Partnership's research found that visitation to heritage sites has been dramatically declining over the past five years. Further research identified one significant cause to this decline -- the heritage tourist demographic profile is that of a highly educated, two-income earning family with little time to plan itineraries. Accordingly, the Partnership has designed and launched the *Where America Happened*TM marketing campaign.

Each element of this campaign makes it easy for citizens and visitors alike to plan multi-faceted trips along heritage themes or geographic destination. These efforts have included: publishing a *Journey Through Hallowed Ground* guidebook, designing a website which educates and facilitates heritage visitation, the creation of visitor maps and brochures, working to create

a National Trust for Historic Preservation Study Tour and the development of audio touring CDs. In addition, the Partnership has implemented a targeted, concentrated media outreach plan which has resulted in over 100 local and national articles including features in *Smithsonian*, *National Geographic* and *Preservation* magazines as well as PBS television and National Public Radio stories.

Allow me to emphasize, however, one very important distinction between marketing the region and the intended results. Clearly, by design, our marketing efforts provide economic benefits to, and support for, our heritage sites, national parks, Main Street Communities and working landscape industry. However, our directive and intended result, as we launched and pursue our *Where America Happened*™ campaign, is to bring civic education alive for children and adults alike. This Partnership feels that The Journey Through Hallowed Ground is a trip every American must take in their lifetime.

Accordingly, we also seek to work with the National Park Service to create interpretive programs on leadership. Such programs will allow visitors to walk in the footsteps of those who created this nation and fought to ensure democracy prevailed. Only by visiting can one begin to comprehend the enormity of the contributions made by normal citizens and statesmen alike. Only by experiencing this Journey can we hope to instill the invaluable lessons of individual acts of leadership under peril which combined to create the character and values of America -- values and lessons which must be shared with generations to come. By combining historic preservation and civic education with sound environmental stewardship, the Partnership aims to help inspire every citizen and visitor alike.

Finally, Heritage Area designation also has more intangible benefits, such as functioning as a federal “seal of approval” that acknowledges the depth of historic assets and importance of a region to our American cultural heritage on a national scale. It is an honor for a region to achieve this congressionally-designated status and propels citizens and communities to greater appreciation and understanding, and spurs voluntary conservation practices. Increased pride of a community and region in its history and traditions increases residents' interest and involvement in retaining and interpreting the heritage for future generations. Conserving the integrity of the cultural heritage and local stories means that future generations will be able to understand their relationship to their communities and have a sense of “place” although they may not be from the area originally. In sum, designation would provide increased opportunity for collaboration, marketing, resource protection, education, interpretation, recreation, heritage celebration, civic involvement and quality of life.

IV. Community Support

Community support for the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area reaches back to 1992 to the origins of the Partnership, when national and local organizations joined together with local citizens to raise awareness of the importance of the history of the region in response to a proposal to build a theme park in the area. Support for the Partnership has come from ordinary citizens and landowners, local businesses, heritage sites, educators, government agencies, and elected bodies such as town councils, counties, historians and other academics, regional planning districts, state general assemblies, and nonprofit conservation and preservation organizations.

For example, over the past several years, in preparation of seeking the National Heritage Area designation, the Partnership has sought to formalize this support through obtaining official resolutions in favor of the National Heritage Area designation and the efforts of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground from seventy-four (74) elected bodies, as shown in Appendix B-1 to the Feasibility Study. In each case, these resolutions were considered after public presentations and thoughtful debate. H. R. 5195 would further this community involvement by allowing all federal, state and local groups to participate actively in the development and implementation of the management plan and allow sites within the area to benefit from collaboration with the National Park Service.

In addition, many residents, business interests and nonprofit organizations within the proposed area have been involved in the planning for the Heritage Area and have demonstrated their support through letters of support. For example, at the time of the writing of the Feasibility Study, thirty-one (31) preservation, conservation and recreation organizations, fifteen heritage sites and foundations, sixteen county, state and regionally elected bodies and fourteen town councils, thirty-five businesses, twenty-one educators and education institutions, and over two hundred and fifty private citizens have written in support of the Heritage Area.

Since the writing of the Feasibility Study, and therefore not listed within it as partners, are the following six additional official partners: Brunswick Main Street and the Partnership for Warrenton Foundation, both business organizations; the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, a heritage foundation; the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Inc., a heritage site; the Turn the Mill Around Campaign, a historic preservation organization; and the Spotsylvania County Board of Supervisors, an elected body. The Heritage Area effort has also generated a high level of public interest, having been written about it over one hundred newspaper articles, fifteen of which were on the front page, and including editorials of support from Vermont to Fredericksburg, Virginia. The Heritage Area also has a high level of voter support, as indicated in a voter survey taken in 2005 regarding the Journey Through Hallowed Ground initiative, which can be viewed on our website, www.HallowedGround.org

As stated, the Partnership already has a very strong foundation of community support and commitment through the involvement and support of more than 150 public and private, foundation, community, and citizen partners already actively involved in heritage activities in the region. Designation would ensure that this level of collaboration and support is increased and sustained.

V. Private Property Protections

Celebrating American heritage is important, and so are constitutionally-protected private property rights. Sections 9 and 10 of H.R. 5195 are devoted to private property protection assurances. Section 9 contains a notice requirement and also allows a property owner to withdraw from being included within the boundary of the Heritage Area by submitting a written request.

Section 10 provides that nothing in the bill would require any property owner to provide governmental or public access to their property, or modifies any federal, state or local law dealing with public access or use of private property or any land use regulation. In addition, Section 10 provides that nothing in the bill creates any liability of any property owners with respect to persons injured on such property. Section 10 provides, further, that nothing in the bill requires a private property owner located within the boundaries of the Heritage Area to participate or be associated with the Heritage Area.

In Section 5(e), the legislation states that the Partnership “may not use Federal funds received under this Act to acquire real property or interest in real property.” In sum, H.R. 5195 contains some of the most stringent private property rights protections of any heritage bill yet passed by Congress. Even private property advocates have acknowledged that the bill’s language is not objectionable from a private property protection standpoint.

Furthermore, a General Accounting Office (GAO) report from 2004 determined that there is no evidence that heritage areas impact private property rights, after extensive interviews with private property rights groups. That conclusion is found in GAO Report 04—593T, “National Park Service: A More Systematic Process for Establishing National Heritage Areas and Actions to Improve Their Accountability Are Needed” (March 30, 2004) (Methodology section). That section states:

[t]o determine the extent to which, if at all, private property rights have been affected by these areas, we discussed this issue with the national coordinator, regional officials, the Executive Director of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas . . . the executive directors of the 23 heritage areas that were established at the time of our work, and representatives of several private property rights advocacy groups and individuals, including the American Land Rights Association, the American Policy Center, the Center for Private Conservation, the Heritage Foundation, the National Wilderness Institute, and the Private Property Foundation of America. In each of these discussions, we asked the individuals if they were aware of any cases in which a heritage area had positively or negatively affected an individual’s property rights or restricted its use. None of these individuals were able to provide such an example.

Zoning and land use policies remain local decisions made by locally elected officials who are directly accountable to citizens they represent. There are no federal mandates in this bill. As concluded by Carol Hardy Vincent and David Whiteman in a Congressional Research Service, Resources, Sciences and Industry Division report entitled “Heritage Areas: Background, Proposals, and Current Issues” (updated March 9, 2006), heritage areas are “non-federally owned, managed by local people with many partners and NPS advice, funded from many sources, and intended to promote local economic development as well as protect natural and cultural heritage resources and values” (see page 3 of that report).

VI. Conclusion

Heritage areas are founded on the concept that the best way to conserve important historic, recreational, and cultural assets is through voluntary partnerships and community participation, allowing property to remain in state, local or private ownership but unifying the area through shared efforts at promotion, preservation, and interpretation. It is essential for Congress to continue to recognize the desire of citizens and communities to obtain national recognition for areas with national importance, allowing citizens to promote, and further, a sense of pride of place on a national and international scale.

We understand that the increasing demand on National Park Service resources should dictate that only those sites that are most qualified should be designated by Congress as a heritage area. We strongly believe, and The National Park Service

has agreed, that the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area meets the criterion for designation as a national heritage area and is an example of an area most worthy of national heritage area designation. We thank the National Park Service for working closely with us to ensure that the Partnership's vision for the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area is articulated clearly and meets with their desire for supporting only the most qualified proposals for heritage area designation.

Once again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to address the Subcommittee on this important legislation. I look forward to answering any questions you or your colleagues may have.

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“ "This is the ground of our Founding Fathers. These are landscapes that speak volumes--small towns, churches, fields, mountains, creeks and rivers with names such as Bull Run and Rappahannock. They are the real thing, and what shame we will bring on ourselves if we destroy them."

- David McCullough, a Pulitzer Prize winner and one of the narrators for the PBS "Civil War" series, as stated in a Press Conference regarding the Journey Through Hallowed Ground at the National Press Club on May 11, 1994.