

Committee on Resources,

Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands

[parks](#) - - Rep. Joel Hefley, Chairman

U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515-6207 - - (202) 226-7736

Witness Statement

STATEMENT OF JOSEPH E. DODDRIDGE, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE AND PARKS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 146, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO STUDY THE SUITABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING THE GREAT FALLS HISTORIC DISTRICT IN PATERSON, NEW JERSEY, AS A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

March 13, 2001

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 146, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of designating the Great Falls Historic District in Paterson, New Jersey, as a unit of the National Park System.

The Department of the Interior recommends that the Committee defer action on H.R. 146 until the National Park Service (NPS) is able to make further progress on the President's Initiative to eliminate the deferred maintenance backlog within five years. We are seeking a temporary moratorium on new park unit designations or authorizations of new studies so that we can focus our existing staff and resources on taking care of what we now own. We also want to use our available planning funds to complete previously authorized studies with a close examination of the life-cycle costs of establishing a new park unit, expanding an existing unit, or adding new NPS funding obligations.

Paterson, New Jersey has a rich history as the Nation's first planned industrial city as well as containing some of the country's oldest textile mills. In 1792, Alexander Hamilton formed an investment group called the Society of Useful Manufactures whose funds would be used to develop a planned industrial city in the United States that was later to become Paterson. Hamilton believed that the United States needed to reduce its dependence on foreign goods and should instead develop its own industries. The industries developed in Paterson were powered by the 77-foot high Great Falls of the Passaic, and a system of water raceways that harnessed the power of the falls. The district originally included dozens of mill buildings and other manufacturing structures associated with the textile industry and later, the firearms, silk, and railroad locomotive manufacturing industries. In the latter half of the 1800's, silk production became the dominant industry and formed the basis of Paterson's most prosperous period, earning it the nickname "Silk City." Paterson was also the site of historic labor unrest that focused on anti-child labor legislation, safety in the workplace, a minimum wage, and reasonable working hours.

Industrial decline in Paterson followed the general pattern for northern textile cities, with a major decrease in business during the middle third of the 20th Century. Today, the historic district reflects many phases of decline and renewal: some buildings are deteriorated and vacant, while others continue in industrial use or

have been adaptively reused for housing and offices.

Because of its significant role in the economic and industrial development of the United States, the 89-acre Great Falls of the Passaic/Society of Useful Manufacturers Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) in 1976. Since 1988 the District has been listed as a Priority One threatened National Historic Landmark in the Department of the Interior's annual report to Congress on NHLs. This threatened status is primarily based on the condition of the 7-acre site that formerly housed the Allied Textile Printers. This site, immediately below the Great Falls, has been devastated by a dozen fires over the last 15 years. The site was acquired by the City of Paterson through foreclosure in 1994 and a developer is currently under contract to redevelop the site.

In addition, we are concerned that such a study would serve to divert the City of Paterson and the National Park Service from the very real opportunities authorized by Congress in 1992 and 1996, opportunities that have yet to be fully realized.

In the Fiscal Year 1992 Appropriations bill for the Department of the Interior, Congress appropriated funds for the New Jersey Urban History Initiative to provide funding for historic preservation projects that encourage economic development. The City of Paterson was authorized to receive \$4.147 million in Urban History Initiative Funds to be administered by the NPS under a cooperative agreement with the City. Over the years, the NPS has worked closely with the City to use the money to protect historic resources while fostering compatible economic development. This initiative has shown results such as funding projects for research, community grants, and restoration of historic resources. For example, Urban History Initiative Funds were used for an oral history project and ethnographic study conducted by the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center. Funds were also used for the stabilization of the ruins of the Colt Gun Mill as part of a match for a New Jersey Historic Trust grant to the City of Paterson.

The second major congressional initiative to support historic preservation opportunities in Paterson is section 510 of the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-333; 110 Stat. 4158). The Great Falls Historic District was authorized for \$3.3 million in matching grants and assistance to develop and implement a preservation and interpretive plan for the District, and permit the development of a market analysis with recommendations of the economic development potential of the District. Yet, none of these funds authorized in 1996 have been appropriated.

Although the City has committed to the raising of the matching funds required under the authorization, we do not believe that this has yet occurred. Such matching funds will be important because recent legislation indicates that Congress expects significant non-federal matches for new units of the national park system containing large numbers of historic buildings such as the New Bedford National Historical Park and Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area. Without this demonstrated local financial support for the operation and protection of new park units, it is probably not feasible to recommend their addition to the System.

The 1996 legislation provides Paterson with the opportunity both to demonstrate its capacity for partnership, and to develop and implement a preservation program as indicators of its commitment and capacity. The successful completion of that program could lead to a future congressional designation or reauthorized partnership funding as appropriate.

Our concern is that given limited resources, a special resource study (SRS) could divert attention from the

existing opportunities authorized in the 1996 Act. The SRS could easily take years to complete, especially when considering other congressionally authorized studies that are competing for limited money available in this program. If the recommendations of the study were negative and no congressional action forthcoming, years would have passed with no preservation or development action.

The National Park Service believes in the important historic and natural resources in the City of Paterson, and we believe in the capacity of the City to identify matching funding. There are signs this is beginning to happen. The breadth of activities allowed under the 1996 Act is much greater than those normally authorized for a national park unit. It is our sincere wish that the currently authorized preservation initiative for Paterson be allowed to proceed rather than being delayed by a study.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members might have.

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