

Testimony of Robert v. L. Hartwell
Chairman, Elizabeth Hartwell Environmental Education Fund
Of the National Heritage Foundation's Potomac Foundation

www.HartwellFund.com

Before the House Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans
Statement in Support of H.R. 3682
December 6, 2005

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee, my name is Robert v. L. Hartwell and I appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee this afternoon in support of H.R. 3682, legislation introduced by Congressman Tom Davis to rename the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge in honor of my deceased mother Elizabeth S. Hartwell.

Accompanying me today is my wife, Kathy Hartwell, and my Son and Liz Hartwell's Grandson Stephen Hartwell. I regret that my daughter Heather and Mom's remaining sister Martha could not be here with us. I am testifying today as the Chairman of a small non-profit Foundation's Fund named for my mother. Most importantly, during Mom's nearly 30 years of public volunteer efforts to preserve Mason Neck, I lived with her or worked closely with her during dozens of campaigns to preserve Mason Neck for its unique role in providing the only habitat near our Nation's Capital for nesting American Bald Eagles. It was during this time that she met and worked with Congressman Tom Davis, the sponsor of H.R. 3682, and many political and civic leaders, including, Mr. Chairman, Maryland Congressmen Gilbert Gude and Newton Steers.

Mom admittedly used the Eagles in her campaigns to defeat unwise development and industrial projects that would have led to the decimation of what are today nearly 6,000 acres of land preserved for environmental and historical benefit. In addition to the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, which comprises nearly 2,300 acres of pristine woods, wetlands, forests and Bald Eagle habitat, Mom was instrumental in creating a unique situation where five public entities have joined together preserving Mason Neck's lands, including the Mason Neck State Park; Gunston Hall, the home of the author of our Bill of Rights, George Mason; Pohick Bay Regional Park; and most recently the acquisition via federal legislation of an east coast wild horse management area for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Let me briefly mention that the environmental center at the State Park is named for Elizabeth Hartwell; that Mom cut the Ribbon on the Pohick Bay Golf Course as an original member of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority; and that Congressmen Tom Davis and Jim Moran, who formerly represented this area, were instrumental in preserving the BLM parcel in a creative land swap with private developers.

Specifically, in regard to the Refuge, Mom orchestrated Congressional testimony and garnered the support of the Fairfax County Virginia Board of Supervisors, then Chaired by the Hon. Jack Herrity... who testified before Congress seeking the original \$3 million appropriation. She snuck aboard an environmental bus tour with former Secretary of Interior Stuart Udall, convincing him to take a later helicopter tour aimed at preserving Mason Neck for the American Bald Eagle... eventually gaining the full support of our Interior Department. She founded the Citizens Council for a Clean Potomac, organized the original Friends of Mason Neck organization, and served in dozens of organizations supportive of preserving Mason Neck. She also received dozens of honors, including being named Fairfax County Citizen of the Year and earned the Elly Doyle award from the Fairfax County Park Authority.

All of this information has been submitted for the record, so let me state in the most personal terms as her son what a well-deserved honor enactment of this legislation would be for Mom, her family and her important legacy. Enactment of this legislation would reaffirm that one woman can make a huge difference for so many.

I was with Mom on many of her trips into the Refuge's Great Marsh, an 800 plus acre wetland of insurmountable beauty and the original roosting place for most of Mason Neck's eagles. From local politicians, to Authors and the Press, and to Reps. John Dingell, Henry Reuss, Joel Broyhill, Gilbert Gude, Newton Steers and many others who knew Mom, they knew of her tenacity, drive and that she did her homework. In nearly 30 years of activism, the only battle she lost at the end of her tireless efforts, was to Cardio Pulmonary Disease. She led efforts to defeat a satellite city on the refuge, to defeat agent orange testing nearby to the only eagles nest left on the "Neck." From deep sea ports, to gambling resorts, to LNG gas pipelines, military airports, and massive housing developments, Liz Hartwell did her homework, fought tirelessly without compensation, and engaged the support of many others in her battles... or our behalf.

Rep. Davis's legislation has the support of all local civic groups, who indeed actually suggested this effort move forward, the Potomac Foundation and our local elected officials. The Mason Neck State Park still carries the name and Rep. Davis's legislation simply supplements the existing geographical location with the name of the woman, who without her work and vision, no refuge would exist.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this hearing. I humbly urge you to move forward on this worthy legislation honoring my mother, Elizabeth S. Hartwell. I also want to extend an invitation to the Subcommittee to visit the refuge or tour it by boat to see an active Eagles nest up close on Belmont Bay.

I'll be glad to answer any questions you may have or provide answers for the record.