

STATEMENT OF JANET SNYDER MATTHEWS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL
RESOURCES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BEFORE
THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 1307, A BILL TO AMEND THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT
TO DESIGNATE PORTIONS OF THE MUSCONETCONG RIVER IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY AS
A COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

November 10, 2005

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee to present the Department of the Interior's position on H.R. 1307, a bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by designating portions of the Musconetcong River in New Jersey as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Department supports enactment of H.R. 1307.

The Musconetcong River is the largest New Jersey tributary to the Delaware River. The area of the river, nestled in the heart of the New Jersey Highlands, contains a remarkably diverse array of natural and cultural resources. The limestone geologic features present in the Musconetcong River corridor are unique in the state, and the steep slopes and forested ridges in the upper segments of the river corridor contrast with the historic villages, pastures, and rolling agricultural lands at the middle and lower end of the river valley.

The impetus for the designation of the Musconetcong began in 1991, when residents in the Musconetcong River Valley organized a petition drive in support of efforts to protect the river. The petitions called for the protection of the Musconetcong River under both the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and New Jersey Wild and Scenic Rivers Program.

In 1992, Congress passed legislation authorizing the National Park Service to study the eligibility and suitability of the Lower Delaware River for addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System. In 1997, 18 of 19 Musconetcong River municipalities voted to have the National Park Service determine the eligibility and suitability of the Musconetcong River for designation into the National Wild and Scenic River System. As a part of the study effort, a Musconetcong Advisory Committee, comprised of residents representing each municipality, was formed. This committee, with assistance from the National Park Service through its authority to study the Lower Delaware River, completed a Resource Assessment and Eligibility and Classification Report (1999) as well as a Musconetcong River Management Plan (April, 2003). The report found that approximately 24 miles of the river are eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System because of their free-flowing nature and outstandingly remarkable recreational, scenic, cultural, and wildlife and habitat values.

The Musconetcong River Management Plan was developed cooperatively and calls for a management framework that acknowledges the importance and preference for local leadership, and the additional protections afforded by national wild and scenic river designation. A key principle of the management framework as proposed in the plan is that existing institutions will continue to play primary roles in the long-term protection of the Musconetcong River. With respect to facilitating and coordinating potentially diverse interests among residents, landowners, municipalities, counties, states and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the plan proposes the formation of a Musconetcong River Management Committee.

The bill provides that the administration for the 24.2-mile designated river segment is to be consistent with the cooperatively developed Musconetcong River Management Plan (2003) and is to be undertaken in cooperation with federal, state, county and municipal governments. The bill also identifies an additional river segment that would be suitable for designation by the Secretary of the Interior only at such time as it can be demonstrated that adequate local support for such designation exists within the affected local jurisdictions. The costs associated with a designated wild and scenic river in the Northeast Region of the National Park Service average \$150,000 annually (for cooperative agreements with river partner organizations), and we would expect the costs to be similar for this river, although the expenditures per river will likely decline as more designated rivers have to share limited resources. The region will handle the work associated with the newly designated river with existing staff. Any funding for cooperative agreements with the river's partner organizations will be dependent upon annual appropriations and departmental funding priorities.

This completes my prepared statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this bill.