

STATEMENT OF DONALD W. MURPHY, DEPUTY DIRECTOR , NATIONAL PARK SERVICE,  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING S. 1627, TO AUTHORIZE THE SECRETARY OF  
THE INTERIOR TO CONDUCT A SPECIAL RESOURCES STUDY TO EVALUATE RESOURCES ALONG  
THE COASTAL REGION OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE AND TO DETERMINE THE SUITABILITY  
AND FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A UNIT OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM IN DELAWARE.

May 25, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 1627, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a Special Resources Study along the coastal region of the State of Delaware. The Department supports enactment of the legislation with one amendment regarding the time period provided for the study.

While the Department supports the authorization of this study, it is important that future funding requests go towards completing previously authorized studies. There are currently 25 studies in progress, and we hope to complete and transmit 8 to Congress by the end of 2006. Therefore, the Department will focus the funding provided towards completing these studies.

The coastal region of the state of Delaware has a long and distinguished history of Native American occupation, colonial settlement and contributions to this nation's heritage. Algonquian-speaking tribes populated the region before the period of European discovery. Early explorations of Delaware's coastline were made by the Spaniards and Portuguese in the sixteenth century, by Henry Hudson in 1609 under the auspices of the Dutch, by Samuel Argall in 1610, by Cornelius May in 1613, and by Cornelius Hendricksen in 1614. During a storm, Argall was blown off course and sailed into a strange bay, which he named in honor of his governor - Lord De La Warr.

In 1631, 11 years after the landing of the English pilgrims at Plymouth, Massachusetts, the first white settlement was established by the Dutch. This was followed in 1638 by the first Swedish settlement at "The Rocks" on the Christina River, where a fort was built called "Fort Christina" after the young queen of Sweden. Fort Christina in Wilmington, with a monument created by the noted sculptor Carl Milles and presented by the people of Sweden, perpetuates the memory of these first settlers and preserves "The Rocks" where they first landed.

In the autumn of 1655, Peter Stuyvesant came from New Amsterdam with a Dutch fleet, subjugated the Swedish settlements, and established the authority of the Colony of New Netherlands throughout the area. The Dutch were eventually replaced by the English. In 1776 at the time of the Declaration of Independence, Delaware not only declared itself free from the British Empire, but also established a state government entirely separate from Pennsylvania. The State became the first to ratify the United States Constitution on December 7, 1787.

The importance of the Delaware Bay and River to coastal defense during the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Civil War was marked by the establishment of fortifications to thwart enemy ships from traversing the Delaware River to Philadelphia. Many of these resources remain to remind current generations of past struggles for independence, early nationhood, and preservation of the Union. Delaware became an important component of the Underground Railroad prior to the elimination of slavery during the Civil War. The Delaware River was and remains an important transportation link connecting Delaware and portions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey to world markets.

The coastal region of Delaware also contains important natural resources adjacent to and including Delaware Bay and the Delaware River. It provides resource-based recreational opportunities for fishing, boating, swimming and crabbing. Delaware Bay is a major staging area for shorebird migration with truly spectacular numbers visible during the peak of migration. The region is replete with state parks and wildlife areas that protect resources and provide important opportunities for the public to appreciate and enjoy Delaware's natural treasures.

The region also has played an important role in industry, including the exploitation of water power. The outbreak of the Civil War, for example, found Wilmington with a strong industrial base, which responded to meet the great demands of waging war. Wilmington products included ships, railroad cars, gunpowder, shoes, tents, uniforms, blankets and other war-related goods. By 1868, Wilmington was producing more iron ships than the rest of the country combined and it rated first in the production of gunpowder and second in carriages and leather. Industries thrived along the Delaware, especially the chemicals and materials company that was founded by the Dupont family in the 19th century and continues to be one of the largest chemical-related companies in the world.

The Department suggests one amendment to S. 1627. Section 4 of the bill requires that a report on findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study be submitted to the Senate and House authorizing committees no later than one year after funds are made available to carry out the Act. We believe it more feasible to provide that this occur no later than three

years after funds are made available based on the number of Special Resource Studies currently being conducted by the Department.

If this study is authorized, the Department expects to coordinate this study with the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail study, which is evaluating resources along the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries including portions in the State of Delaware.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I will be pleased to answer any questions from members of the Committee.

Proposed amendment to S. 1627, Delaware National Coastal Special Resources Study Act.

On page 4, line 11, strike "1 year" and insert "3 years".