

Testimony in Behalf of the Metacomet-Monadnock-Sunapee-Mattabesett Trail

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands

July 24, 2001

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts. The legislation which I am supporting here, introduced by my Massachusetts delegation colleague, Mr. Olver, would allow the National Park Service to examine the 3 existing trails, as well as opportunities to extend the trail through the remaining 2 gaps.

National scenic trails are those that provide for maximum recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. This trail passes all of these requirements, as a National Park Service study will surely show.

A section of this trail in my district includes the Holyoke Mountain Range and is within an hour drive of three-quarters of a million people. Throughout the range, outcrops open up to many spectacular views of the Connecticut River valley, including the Oxbow, a circular lake formed by flooding caused by an ice jam in 1840 which changed the boundaries of the towns of Northampton and Hadley.

This section of the trail is the site of many historically significant events, including the Shays' Rebellion. Daniel Shays, warden of the town of Pelham, rounded up a group of farmers whose farms had fallen into disrepair when they fought in the Revolution. They rebelled in response to the confiscation of their lands and livestock in lieu of tax payments. Massachusetts militia were sent to quell their uprising and Shays' rebel band hid along the trail in the legendary Horse Caves. These caves can still be visited today.

The Holyoke Range was created when hardened volcanic lava was uplifted millions of years ago. The range was formed in an East-West direction, even though every other range in the valley runs North-South. This orientation has caused the forests of each side of the range to be completely different. The north side resembles the forests of northern New England with hemlock, white pine, beech and birch. The south side resembles southern New England with oak, hickory and shrubs of the heath family. One can travel the Metacomet-Monadnock trail and see the beauty of both southern and northern New England.

We in Massachusetts have had great success working with the National Park Service on conservation projects. We have strong grassroots organizations which can step in and make a National Scenic Trail successful. These groups have had success along the Connecticut River for many years and are capable of providing the necessary support to a National Scenic Trail. This legislation is formally supported by conservation groups, the Appalachian Mountain Club, local government and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs.

I appreciate your cooperation and assistance with this request and look forward to working with you on behalf of the Metacomet-Monadnock-Sunapee-Mattabesett Trail.

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