

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks & Public Lands

Witness Statement

STATEMENT OF KATHERINE STEVENSON, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE HOUSE REOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS CONCERNING H.R. 1615, A BILL TO AMEND THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT TO EXTEND THE DESIGNATION OF THE LAMPREY RIVER IN NEW HAMPSHIRE AS A RECREATIONAL RIVER TO INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL RIVER SEGMENT.

JULY 20, 1999

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear today before the subcommittee and to present the Department of the Interior's position on H.R. 1615. H.R. 1615 would amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to extend the designation of the Lamprey River in New Hampshire to include an additional 12-mile segment of the river in the Town of Epping, New Hampshire, as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The department supports enactment of this bill.

In 1991 the National Park Service, through Public Law 102-214, was directed to undertake a Wild and Scenic River study of a portion of New Hampshire's Lamprey River. In June of 1995, the National Park Service issued its findings in a draft study report. The National Park Service found the 23.5-mile segment of the Lamprey River, running from the Bunker Pond Dam in West Epping to the confluence of the Lamprey and Piscassic Rivers in the vicinity of the Newmarket-Durham town line, to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Although 23.5 miles of the Lamprey River were found eligible for inclusion in the national system, there was then local support for designation of only the 11.5 miles running from the southern Lee Town line to the confluence with the Piscassic River. Due to the lack of local support for designation of the Epping Town segment, the National Park Service recommended that only the 11.5-mile segment of the Lamprey in Lee, Durham and Newmarket Towns be designated as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

As part of the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996, that 11.5-mile segment of the Lamprey River was designated as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. That act also recommended that the National Park Service continue to offer assistance to the Town of Epping regarding the potential future addition of the 12-mile eligible segment now contemplated for designation.

On March 16, 1999, acting upon the recommendation of the Epping Board of Selectmen, the citizens of Epping voted overwhelmingly at their annual Town Meeting to seek designation of their 12-mile segment of the Lamprey and to officially join with their downstream communities in Wild and Scenic designation. This vote of support is a testimony to the success of the Wild and Scenic River designation in the communities of Newmarket, Durham, and Lee. During Epping's deliberations, officials from Lee, Durham and Newmarket strongly endorsed the Wild and Scenic River designation and the program they are involved in to protect the Lamprey River. This support is based on the solid partnership that the designation has forged among local, state, and federal groups -- a partnership that is already yielding important successes for the long-term protection and use of the Lamprey River.

H.R. 1615 would complete the designation of the 23.5-mile Lamprey River segment found eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as presented in the National Park Service's draft study report of June 1995. The portion of the Lamprey through Epping represents some of the wildest and most beautiful stretches of the entire

Lamprey. It is a sanctuary for many species of wildlife and a special place for quiet contemplation and enjoyment. The designation of this 12-mile segment, which now has strong local support, would more than double the mileage of the Lamprey included in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and is an important step toward preserving this special resource.

This completes my testimony. I will be happy to answer questions of the committee regarding this legislation.

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