

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE NATIONAL PARKS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 5195, A BILL TO ESTABLISH THE JOURNEY THROUGH HALLOWED GROUND NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

September 28, 2006

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 5195, a bill to establish the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area.

While a feasibility study has found the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area appropriate for designation, we recommend that the committee defer action on H.R. 5195 until program legislation is enacted that establishes guidelines and a process for the designation of national heritage areas. We continue to look forward to working with Congress on this important issue.

The proposed Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area would span a region of approximately 175 miles along Route 15 and part of Route 20, from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania through Maryland and West Virginia to Charlottesville, Virginia. The region is rich in historic and natural resources including the homes of Presidents Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and Dwight David Eisenhower, and includes significant Revolutionary and Civil War sites. Revolutionary War sites include Willow Grove, the temporary headquarters of Generals Wayne and Muhlenberg; Point of Fork Arsenal; Castle Hill, home of colonial leader Dr. Thomas Walker; and the Hessian Barracks, used as a prison for British soldiers. Civil War sites include the battlefields of Gettysburg, Monocacy, Antietam, Brandy Station, and Chancellorsville, among others. The region is also crossed by numerous historic trails and byways relating to the Civil War and other scenic resources. All told, there are an estimated 7,000 buildings in the area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 13 National Historic Landmarks, and two World Heritage Sites.

H.R. 5195 would establish the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area and designate the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership (Partnership) as the management entity. The Partnership is a nonprofit corporation that has conducted a significant number of public meetings, an important requirement for evaluating local support for the designation of a national heritage area. The bill prescribes the duties of the management entity, provides for the Secretary and the Partnership to enter into a compact, requires the development of a management plan by the Partnership to be approved by the Secretary, and includes a 15-year authorization for up to \$1 million dollars per year not to exceed a total of \$10 million

Previously, the Department testified that we did not support the designation of this heritage area during a June hearing before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. We believed that the feasibility study was inadequate and did not fully address the required criteria for designation of national heritage areas. Without this necessary information, we were unable to make a recommendation on whether or not the area met the criteria for designation as a national heritage area. Based on our recommendations, the Partnership revised the study, addressing the necessary criteria and generally outlining a boundary for the national heritage area.

The Department has had the opportunity to review a revised feasibility study recently submitted by the Partnership. We find that the revised study provides adequate information for the National Park Service to make a determination that the area does meet the existing interim criteria for designation of a national heritage area. It presents a comprehensive overview of the nationally important themes and the many significant historic resources along the Route 15 corridor. It contains numerous indications of support for designation by affected governments and organizations in the area, as well as citizens. The management alternatives are now more fully developed and several other improvements have been made to the report.

Although the revised report is greatly improved, the Department still has many concerns with the language contained in H. R. 5195. For example, section 4 of the bill calls for the Secretary and the Partnership to enter into a compact to delineate the boundaries of the heritage area, discuss heritage area goals and objectives, and explain the proposed approach to conservation and interpretation. Although compacts were found in many of the older national heritage areas designated over the past 10 years, they have been replaced by a requirement to complete a feasibility study that includes this information. We recommend that this section be removed from the bill.

Second, we note that section 5(a)(2)(D) provides that funds authorized under the legislation to the management entity may be used to acquire lands and interests in land, while section 5(e) prohibits the use of such funds for acquisition of real property or any interest therein. We recommend that section 5(a)(2)(D) be removed from the bill since it is inconsistent with past heritage area statutes, which prohibit the use of federal funds authorized for heritage areas to be used for land acquisition.

Third, we note that section 3(b)(1) and (2) generally describe the boundaries of the proposed national heritage area and reference a map that is not an official NPS map. If this bill moves forward, we would like to provide to the committee an acceptable official map with an appropriate National Park Service citation. In addition, the bill language describing the counties and areas included within the proposed boundary would need to be updated to reflect the revised map.

If this bill moves forward, there are a number of other technical amendments to the bill that we would like to discuss with the committee so that H.R. 5195 would be more consistent with other recent bills to designate national heritage areas.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony and I am prepared to answer any questions that you or other members of the committee might have at this time.