

**STATEMENT OF MEGHAN WREN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BAYSHORE  
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**HEARING: HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS AND  
PUBLIC LANDS, COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES.**

**BILL: H.R. 1815, TO EXTEND THE AUTHORIZATION FOR THE NEW JERSEY  
COASTAL HERITAGE TRAIL ROUTE.**

**JULY 12, 2007**

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Good morning, my name is Meghan Wren, I am founder and Executive Director of the Bayshore Discovery Project in Bivalve, New Jersey. The Bayshore Discovery Project operates the Delaware Bay Museum from the historic Bivalve oyster Shipping Sheds and Wharves which serve as a tourism destination, a maritime community center and the homeport to New Jersey's Official Tall Ship, the *A. J. Meerwald*. The restored Delaware Bay oyster schooner serves as a living history educational classroom providing a once-in-a-lifetime experience for 5,000 kids each year. It is an honor for me to speak here today on behalf of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route and in support of H. R. 1815 that would extend the authorization of the Trail until September 30, 2011.

The Bayshore Discovery Project has been a New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail destination since the Trail's Maritime History theme first opened to the public in 1993. BDP provided resources for the development of the trail and benefited from outdoor interpretive wayside exhibits that it provided explaining to the public, 24/7, the schooner's major restoration and the importance of the maritime resources along the New Jersey side of the Delaware Bay.

The Trail has been a great boon to numerous other important natural and cultural resource destinations along the 300 miles of New Jersey coastline that lie within the Trail's project area. Beneficiaries include marinas, Coast Guard stations, lighthouses, state parks and forests, historic sites, and natural areas associated with New Jersey's critical role in international wildlife migrations. Many of these destinations would be unable to provide the same level of promotion, interpretation, and resource protection without the assistance and coordination of the Trail. The technical assistance provided promotes resource awareness and stewardship among both local residents and the millions of annual visitors to the Jersey Shore.

This support is very cost effective. Unlike traditional National Parks, the Trail does not own or manage any of the destinations directly. Everything is accomplished through partnerships. I was surprised to learn that the Trail manages over 1,100 outdoor wayside exhibits spread among the sixty-plus current destinations. This is more outdoor educational wayside exhibits than are managed by any other National Park project in the entire United States--quite an accomplishment for such a modestly-funded program. It is essential that this program be continued.

The Trail has been very important in supporting heritage tourism and expanding economic benefits along the Delaware Bay in my region of the New Jersey coast. This is critical to my area that falls within the most economically-challenged region of the State. The Park Service presence brings a level of expertise and credibility that has supported local efforts to build awareness of the national importance and fragility of the New Jersey coastline.

Although much has been accomplished by this modest project, there is great potential to do more to benefit all Americans in raising awareness of New Jersey's role in the national story of the United States and in the international story of New Jersey's central role in wildlife migrations. I encourage you to support this legislation that would extend the authorization of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route and build upon the partnerships that have been so successful to date and so important to Bayshore Discovery Project and to the many other benefiting organizations and agencies.

Thank you for allowing me to testify this morning.

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