

**STATEMENT OF CAM SHOLLY, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, VISITOR AND RESOURCE PROTECTION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LANDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 412, TO AMEND THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT TO DESIGNATE A SEGMENT OF THE NASHUA RIVER AND TRIBUTARIES IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS FOR STUDY FOR POTENTIAL ADDITION TO THE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

**June 6, 2013**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on H.R. 412, a bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of the Nashua River and its tributaries in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

The Department supports enactment of H.R. 412. The river segments and tributary areas proposed for study exhibit the types of qualities and resource values that would make it a worthy and important candidate for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. However, we feel that priority should be given to the 30 previously authorized studies for potential units of the National Park System, potential new National Heritage Areas, and potential additions to the National Trails System and National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that have not yet been transmitted to Congress.

H.R. 412 directs the Secretary of the Interior to study a 19-mile segment of the mainstem of the Nashua River, except for a 4.8-mile segment that is currently the subject of a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licensing proceeding for an existing hydroelectric facility (Pepperell Hydro Company, P-12721). It is the Department's understanding that this excepted segment would appropriately allow the FERC to complete the ongoing licensing proceeding without the delay that a Wild and Scenic River Study would otherwise impose. As specified in the bill, the study would include unnamed tributaries of the Nashua River along the segment designated for study, in addition to the two named tributaries, the Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers. The bill requires the study to be completed and transmitted to Congress within three years after funding is made available for it.

The Nashua River, once severely polluted, played an important role in the nation's river conservation history by inspiring support for both the state and federal Clean Water Acts. The transformation of the Nashua from a neglected and polluted waterway to one which now boasts the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge, regionally significant paddling and fishing opportunities, a remarkable protected greenway system, and other important natural and cultural values, is a remarkable success story. The Squannacook and

Nissitissit Rivers are two of eastern Massachusetts' most significant remaining cold-water trout fisheries.

If enacted, the National Park Service intends to undertake the study in close cooperation with the affected communities, the relevant agencies of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and interest groups such as the Nashua River Watershed Association through a partnership-based study approach. The partnership-based approach is recognized in Section 10(e) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as a means of encouraging state and local governmental participation in the administration of a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The partnership-based approach also allows for development of a proposed river management plan as part of the study, which helps landowners and local jurisdictions understand their potential future roles in river management should Congress decide to designate part or all of the rivers being studied.

Although the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires the development of a comprehensive river management plan within three years of the date of designation, it has become the practice of the National Park Service to prepare this plan as part of a study of potential wild and scenic rivers when much of the river runs through private lands. This allows the National Park Service to consult widely with local landowners, federal and state land management agencies, local governments, river authorities, and other groups that have interests related to the river prior to determining if the river is suitable for designation. Early preparation of the plan also assures input from these entities as well as users of the river on the management strategies that would be needed to protect the river's resources.

This concludes my prepared remarks, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members may have regarding this bill.