

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. CALDWELL, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, REGARDING S. 961, TO REDESIGNATE THE SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE IN SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS, AS THE “SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK”, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

June 21, 2023

Chairman King, Ranking Member Daines, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 961, a bill to redesignate the Salem Maritime National Historic Site in Salem, Massachusetts, as the “Salem Maritime National Historical Park”, and for other purposes.

The Department supports S. 961.

S. 961 would redesignate Salem Maritime National Historic Site as “Salem Maritime National Historical Park”. The bill would also direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a boundary study to evaluate including any sites and resources located within the city of Salem, Massachusetts that are associated with Salem’s maritime history, coastal defenses, or military history, including National Guard and militia activity. This would include the Salem Armory Visitor Center and the Salem Armory Park. The bill provides for the boundary study to be completed within three years of funding being made available for the study.

Designated by Secretarial Order in 1938, Salem Maritime National Historic Site was the first designated national historic site. The park preserves and interprets America’s and New England’s maritime history and the important role that Salem played in the development of international maritime trade from the late 17th century through the 19th century. While the park was originally limited to interpreting the theme of maritime trade through the early 19th century, subsequent legislation broadened the park’s focus to include the domestic life of colonial Salem, and immigration and industrial history of the city in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Currently, the park is an 8.93-acre historic district containing ten historic buildings, nine archeological sites, four historic wharfs, and a historic light station, dating between 1675 and 1944. The *Friendship of Salem*, a replica late-18th century tall ship owned and operated by the National Park Service, reflects Salem’s economic heyday from the 1790’s through the 1830’s. The diverse historic resources and replica tall ship provide living classrooms within which visitors can consider the ways that tall ships and the rise of global maritime trade networks in New England contributed to the American Revolution and helped shape modern socioeconomic and political development in the United States.

The park is also responsible for managing the Salem Regional Visitor Center in downtown Salem at the Salem Armory in which the National Park Service has a limited ownership interest. The Salem Regional Visitor Center serves as the primary Salem Maritime National Historic Site visitor center, provides community spaces to explore the park unit’s interpretive themes in

modern contexts, and supports the Essex National Heritage Area. The park is a key site and gateway to the national heritage area.

The Department believes that the redesignation of Salem Maritime National Historic Site as a national historical park, as provided by S. 961, is appropriate. Generally, National Park System units designated as “national historical parks” have a greater diversity of historical resources and interpretive themes than those designated as “historic sites” and may be spread out over non-contiguous lands. As is reflected in its long history, Salem Maritime National Historic Site has expanded in the scope of its resources and its interpretation. The deeper and broader experience it now offers to visitors supports the basis for redesignation of this park as a national historical park.

The Department also believes that the boundary study provided by S. 961 could be very beneficial. The study would be useful in identifying important maritime-related resources in the vicinity of Salem that should be preserved and protected to enhance our understanding of the significant contributions of this area to our nation’s history.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer questions that you or other members of the Committee might have.