

STATEMENT OF P. DANIEL SMITH, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, EXERCISING THE AUTHORITY OF THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, CONCERNING S. 3468, A BILL TO AMEND THE WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ACT TO DESIGNATE SEGMENTS OF THE NASHUA, SQUANNACOOK, AND NISSITISSIT RIVERS AS COMPONENTS OF THE NATIONAL WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

December 12, 2018

Chairman Daines, Ranking Member King, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on S. 3468, a bill to amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate segments of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and for other purposes.

The Department has preliminarily concluded through the National Park Service's draft study of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers that the river segments proposed for designation under this bill are eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. However, we recommend that the committee defer action on S. 3468 until the study is completed. We anticipate the study will be completed in 2019.

This bill would amend Section 3(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1274(a)) to designate segments of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, to be administered by the Secretary of the Interior. The river segments range from 9.5 miles to 27 miles in length and the designation would encompass over 50 miles of scenic rivers. The bill mandates that the designated river segments shall exclude specific areas with respect to FERC-licensed hydroelectric projects and a non-FERC industrial dam.

The segments would be managed in accordance with the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Stewardship Plan (February 2018) with the Secretary coordinating administration and management with a locally based management committee, as specified in the plan. The bill would authorize the Secretary to enter into cooperative agreements with the States of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the 11 adjoining communities, and appropriate local planning and environmental organizations.

Public Law 113-291, the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, authorized the study of Nashua River in December 2014. The National Park Service conducted the study in close cooperation with the adjoining communities, the States of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the Nashua River Watershed Association, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Devens Enterprise Commission, and other interested local parties.

Technical assistance provided as a part of the study made possible the development of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Stewardship Plan. This plan is based primarily around local partner

actions designed to guide the stewardship of certain segments of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers with or without a National Wild and Scenic River designation.

While the study has not been finalized, the data collected and presented in the preparation of the Stewardship Plan support the conclusion that the segments proposed for designation by S. 3468 exhibit free-flowing character and the presence of outstandingly remarkable natural, cultural and recreation resource values consistent with Wild and Scenic River eligibility. The study process, which culminated in town meeting votes supporting both the Stewardship Plan and Wild and Scenic River designation in all 11 affected Massachusetts and New Hampshire communities, has also demonstrated strong local, state and partner support crucial to successful long-term management and protection of partnership-based Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers possess remarkable resource values including exceptional biological diversity relative to threatened and endangered species habitat, premier fishing and boating opportunities, and a legacy of environmental stewardship that serves as a model for communities throughout the country. The region is also rich in historic and cultural resources, including those associated with Native Americans, Shakers, and transcendentalists.

If S. 3468 is enacted, the designated segments of the Nashua, Squannacook, and the Nissitissit Rivers would be administered based on the Partnership Wild and Scenic River model, similar to several other designations in the Northeast, including the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Rivers in Massachusetts, and the Lamprey River in New Hampshire. This approach emphasizes local and state management solutions, and has proven effective as a means of protecting outstandingly remarkable natural, cultural, and recreational resource values without the need for direct federal management or land acquisition.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.