

**STATEMENT OF CHRISTINA GOLDFUSS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR,
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL PARKS, COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
CONCERNING S. 2293, A BILL TO CLARIFY THE STATUS OF THE NORTH
COUNTRY, ICE AGE, AND NEW ENGLAND NATIONAL SCENIC TRAILS AS UNITS
OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

July 23, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 2293, a bill to clarify the status of the North Country, Ice Age, and New England National Scenic Trails as units of the National Park System.

The Department does not object to S. 2293.

S. 2293 would amend the National Trails System Act to require the North Country, Ice Age, and New England National Scenic Trails to be designated as units of the National Park System. The National Park Service (NPS) has carefully considered the concerns of Congressional members that certain trails are excluded from equal participation in NPS funding and programs because they are not currently counted as units of the National Park System. Although most of these concerns have been addressed through administrative actions, the National Park Service would not object if Congress determines that conferring unit status on these trails is the most expedient means of addressing any perceived inequality. The NPS recommends that the potential concerns of local communities be considered prior to undertaking any change to a particular trail's designation to ensure continued public support, which is critical to the success of our long distance trails.

The NPS administers, or co-administers, a total of 23 long-distance trails, including three that are counted as units of the National Park System. In addition to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, which was established in 1968 and listed as a unit of the National Park System in 1972, the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, and the Natchez Trace National Scenic Trail were listed as units in the mid-1980's through an administrative decision reflecting the extent of Federal land ownership and the NPS' administration of these trails.

Regardless of how the trails are counted, all of the long-distance trails administered by the National Park Service are, by law, part of the National Park System. Therefore, designating any trail as a unit does not change the management of that trail, or affect any existing agreements, easements, or other legal instruments in effect for the administration of the trail. However, we recognize that this difference in the manner in which certain trails are designated may have led to the perception that the trails are receiving unequal treatment.

The National Park Service has taken steps to assure that trails have equal access to NPS funding and that the public is aware of the National Scenic and Historic Trails on the NPS website and other forms of media. We also worked with the National Park Foundation, our Congressionally

authorized philanthropic partner, to allow the long distance trails to be considered for grant funding.

The National Park Service recognizes and values the unique relationship and partnerships that have been developed with communities along these national trails. We will continue to work with the trail partners to improve communications and address any of the concerns that have been regarding equal participation.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.