

**S. 2555, A BILL TO DESIGNATE THE NEW RIVER
GORGE NATIONAL RIVER IN THE STATE OF
WEST VIRGINIA AS THE “NEW RIVER GORGE
NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE,” AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES**

**FIELD HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

FEBRUARY 22, 2020



Printed for the use of the
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.govinfo.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

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**S. 2555, A BILL TO DESIGNATE THE NEW
RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER IN THE
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA AS THE “NEW
RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK AND PRE-
SERVE,” AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2020

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
Beckley, WV.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:40 a.m. at the Governor Hulett C. Smith Theatre, Tamarack Conference Center, 1 Tamarack Park, Beckley, West Virginia, Hon. Joe Manchin III, Ranking Member of the Committee, presiding.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOE MANCHIN III,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WEST VIRGINIA**

Senator MANCHIN. We are going to call the meeting to order.

I would like to welcome everyone to the legislative hearing of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I want to thank you for taking time out of your Saturday to be here today. The purpose of this hearing is to receive testimony on Senate bill 2555, which would redesignate the New River Gorge National River as the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. This hearing is an important step in the legislative process and will help inform us as we consider modifications to the bill as it moves forward through Committee.

As Ranking Member of the Committee, I am particularly proud to be hosting this hearing here in Beckley with my friend and colleague, Senator Capito, and we are very close to the Park, as you know. Although she, unfortunately, had a conflict that kept her from being here today, I would like to thank also another good friend of mine, who is the Chairman of the Committee, we sit on the Committee together, Senator Lisa Murkowski. Her staff is with us today also, and for her support in getting this hearing approved.

Any time we hold an official hearing outside of Washington, it has to be approved by the Committee to be an official meeting. All of our staff, court reporters, everything, comes with us for this, so we are very pleased with that.

The process for this hearing will be as such. I want to take a moment and explain the procedures that we are going to be following this morning. First, as I mentioned, this is an official legislative hearing of the Committee. This means that we will have a video

and audio recording and there will be a public transcript that will include all of the comments we receive today.

If you have a cell phone, please turn it on silent or off. It would help a lot for the meeting to go the way it is supposed to go. I believe all recordings and video is prohibited during this period of time, since we are taking the official one up here.

Following the discussion with our panel of witnesses, members of the public will have the opportunity to provide a statement for the record. To ensure everyone gets a chance to speak, we are asking that you sign up, if you haven't already, and limit your comments to no more than two minutes. If you prefer to submit a written statement, the hearing record will be open for two weeks and instructions are available on the agenda.

With the housekeeping out of the way, let me jump right into the concern that I know many of you have had, ensuring that hunting and fishing within the existing New River Gorge National River will be allowed to continue. These activities are important to our heritage and culture in West Virginia, and protecting them is a top priority. But as many of you know, hunting is not allowed in national parks. So Senator Capito and I proposed the idea of a national park and preserve designation, because hunting and fishing are allowed in national preserve areas.

Together we have worked closely with the National Park Service, who helped us put together different options of how a possible national park and preserve designation might work. The area designated as a national park would include much of the Lower New River Gorge and key historic sites so that the park designation includes the major scenic and historic features and is consistent with other national park designations.

Meanwhile, the rest of the existing national river boundary would be designated a national preserve. Hunting within the preserve area will continue to be managed in the same manner as hunting is presently allowed in the New River Gorge National River, and fishing will continue in both the national park and national preserve areas, exactly as it is right now.

I also want to make it clear that nothing in the bill prohibits hunting, fishing or trapping on private lands. I repeat, nothing in the bill prohibits fishing or trapping on private lands. The National Park Service should not be regulating private lands, but we included language to make this perfectly clear that trapping is allowed on private lands.

In my opinion, the only way a national park and preserve designation will be successful is if there is a broad support from local communities and stakeholders, including the affected sportsmen's groups. I recognize the national park designation requires tradeoffs between protecting these resources in the national park, encouraging economic growth and protecting traditional hunting and fishing access. It is important to have these discussions here in this public setting. Our goal is to make sure that we provide for appropriate protection of the national park resources while at the same time preserving the culture and heritage of this amazing area.

The next legislative step after this hearing will be consideration of the bill by the full Senate Energy and Natural Resources Com-

mittee at which time we will have an opportunity to make any changes.

So thank you, all of you, for turning out today and for previously held public meetings that we have had on this bill, and I want to hear directly from you on your thoughts and comments about this proposal.

With that, I would like to recognize the other co-sponsor of the bill, Senator Shelley Capito, my colleague, for any remarks that she would like to make.

Senator Capito.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WEST VIRGINIA**

Senator CAPITO. Yes, thank you, Senator Manchin. I just want to say this is an incredible turnout of very interested, passionate and information-seeking West Virginians. I am just really proud of, I am sure that when this Committee goes back to Washington, they are going to say, you can't believe the public participation by West Virginians. It is just amazing. So I want to thank the audience, first of all, for coming and joining us.

I want to thank Senator Manchin, too. He is the Ranking Member on this Committee. It is a critical position for him to be in on a lot of different issues that are important to our state. I want to thank you for bringing the Committee here on the bill that will redesignate this New River, national river, as a national park and preserve.

In addition too, in her absence, I want to thank the Committee Chair, Lisa Murkowski, from Alaska. She was unable to attend but she will be absolutely pivotal in anything that moves forward from this point.

I would like to thank our witnesses for taking the time today to come and share their thoughts on how they feel. I want to, again, thank all of you. I am pleased to be on the legislation with Senator Manchin as a co-sponsor to redesignate the New River Gorge National River as the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.

I am going to go through a little bit of the history. The New River Gorge was established as a national river in 1978. Some of you in the room were probably active with that. The New River Gorge comprises 72,000 acres of land along 53 miles of the New River, stretching from the Bluestone Dam to Hawks Nest. The New River Gorge has been cherished by generations of West Virginians, many in this room, and serves as a real source of pride for our state. It encapsulates our Appalachian heritage which Senator Manchin, I think, really addressed, while preserving those long-standing traditions of hunting and fishing in our state.

Casual adventurers and thrill seekers alike come to the New River Gorge to raft its world class rapids, hike the scenic trails, climb the treacherous rock faces, I am actually not doing that, and watch the BASE jumpers, which I don't do either. I do watch them, but I don't BASE jump. Have you ever BASE jumped?

Senator MANCHIN. They tried to push me off.

Senator CAPITO. They tried to push——

[Laughter.]

Was that me?

[Laughter.]

Senator MANCHIN. You were out there rooting.

[Laughter.]

Senator CAPITO. In any event, they catapult on Bridge Day which we all really enjoy with the breathtaking views.

After hearing from a growing chorus of constituents, business owners and local officials, I decided it was time to take action to elevate the stature of the New River National River into the National Park System. We have had numerous meetings, and many of you have been in the meetings. We have been to three meetings ourselves, together, with a whole host of interested parties, but my staff and Joe's staff have also been out, and also the staff of the Committee has been out numerous times, to make sure that we are listening to everybody. But today is a unique opportunity.

With unanimous consent, I am asking Joe to let me submit for the public record of this hearing letters of support from eight local governments, three local trade associations, three local businesses, the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority, the Fayette County Commission, the Giles County Virginia Board of Supervisors and also text of a West Virginia House of Delegates Concurrent Resolution 50 that was done in 2019.

So, unanimous consent?

Senator MANCHIN. Granted.

Senator CAPITO. I am winning already.

[Letters of support follow.]

CITY OF BECKLEY



P. O. BOX 2514 • BECKLEY, WEST VIRGINIA 25802-2514

ROBERT R. RAPPOLD
Mayor

Phone: (304) 256-1750
Fax: (304) 256-1767
Email: robert.rappold@beckley.org

August 31, 2018

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senate
172 Russell Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Ms. Capito:

Please see the attached resolution passed by City of Beckley Common Council on August 28, 2018.

This resolution, passed on a 7-0 vote, endorses the City of Beckley's support of designating the current New River National River New River National Park.

Thank you for any help on achieving this important goal for for the New River region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Robert Rappold", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert R. Eappold

MAYOR
CITY OF BECKLEY

RRR:rlw

cc: David Arnold
enclosure

Joseph M. Blankenship
Mayor



Cris C. Meadows
City Manager

Resolution of the City of Hinton
in Support of
National Park Designation for the New River Gorge National River

WHEREAS, the Greenbrier and New Rivers flow through our great city promising adventure and relaxation to all who live and visit here. and

WHEREAS, the City of Hinton and its residents wish to share our city's beauty and the plethora of recreational opportunities such as camping, fishing, hunting, trapping, hiking, climbing, biking, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, horse backing riding, and sight-seeing to national park enthusiasts from across the country. and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge is an ancient river with beautiful scenery, white water and home to many animals and plants significant to our area and our great mountain state. and

WHEREAS, the City of Hinton believes rebranding of the New River Gorge National River as New River Gorge National Park will create employment opportunities and great economic growth and opportunity to not only Hinton and Summers County but the entire New River Gorge Region as well as the State of West Virginia. Now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the City of Hinton strongly urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue with great determination legislation to designate the New River Gorge National River as the New River Gorge National Park. and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that said legislation

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

This Resolution was duly discussed and adopted at a regular meeting of the Hinton City Council on the 21st day of August, 2018.



Joseph Blankenship, Mayor

**Resolution of the City of Summersville in Support of National Park Designation
for New River Gorge National River**

Whereas, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Gauley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs; and

Whereas, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

Whereas, the National Park Service has promulgated special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails at New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated;

Whereas, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized;

Whereas, commercial whitewater recreation on the New River is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helps Fayette County attract businesses and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

Whereas, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation at New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy;

Whereas, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit;

Whereas, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years;

Whereas, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park;

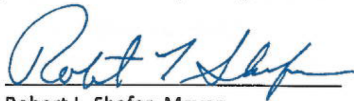
Therefore, be it resolved that the City of Summersville urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner that:

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;

- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

Now therefore, be it resolved, that the City of Summersville is in support of the National Park Designation for the New River Gorge National River.

Approved this 27th day of August 2018.



Robert L. Shafer, Mayor
City of Summersville

From: Sharon Cruikshank
Sent: Thursday, September 12, 2019 10:41 AM
To: Eckerson, Mary (Capito)
Subject: New River Park & Preserve

Senator Capito,

Thank you so much for reading my email today. I appreciate the service you give our state and its great to see Democrat and Republican working together for the benefit of our GREAT STATE.

We market the New River Gorge, but if the New River Gorge becomes a National Park & Preserve this would open up southern WV and the region bringing more attention and desirability as a destination for travelers as well as residents in other parts of the state.

Our community needs to have this designation in order to take the next step in growth with a controlled focus on preservation and the future generations. Please continue to support and fight for this designation.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. If you need anything from our office or the Town of Fayetteville please let me know. My cell phone is 304-663-8575.

Sharon

**At the New River Gorge
Sharon Cruikshank**

**310 W. Oyler Avenue
Oak Hill, WV 25901
304-465-5617
www.FayetteCounty.com
www.NewRiverGorgeCVB.com
www.OfficialBridgeDay.com**

**Resolution of the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce in Support of National
Park Designation for New River Gorge National River**

Whereas, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Gauley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs ; and

Whereas, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

Whereas, the National Park Service has promulgated special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails at New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated;

Whereas, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized;

Whereas, commercial whitewater recreation on the New River is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helps Fayette County attract businesses and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

Whereas, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation at New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy;

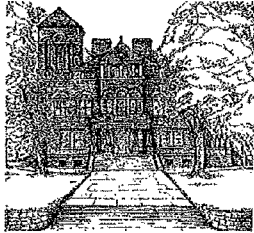
Whereas, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit;

Whereas, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years;

Whereas, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner that:

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- continues to specifically authorize Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge as currently permitted as granted in WV S.B. 441 in 1990 and enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.



FAYETTE COUNTY COMMISSION

FAYETTEVILLE, WV 25840-0307

TELEPHONE (304) 574-4290

FAX (304) 574-4255

JOHN G. BRENNEMEN
SCARBRO, WV
COMMISSIONER

MATTHEW D. WENDER
OAK HILL, WV
PRESIDENT

DENISE A. SCALPH
FAYETTEVILLE, WV
COMMISSIONER

DEBORAH A. BERRY
ADMINISTRATOR

August 17, 2018

The Honorable Joe Manchin
300 Virginia Street, East Suite 2630
Charleston, WV 25301

Dear Senator Manchin:

The Fayette County Commission wholeheartedly supports federal legislation of a land bill to create a National Park in the heart of West Virginia.


Attached please find a resolution of the Fayette County Commission approved on August 17, 2018 urging the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this worthy request.

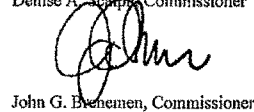
Sincerely yours,



Matthew D. Wender, President



Denise A. Scalp, Commissioner



John G. Brennen, Commissioner

CC: Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Congressman Evan Jenkins

**Resolution of the Fayette County Commission
in Support of National Park Designation for New River Gorge National River**

WHEREAS, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Ganley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs; and

WHEREAS, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make the New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service has endorsed special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails in the New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated; and

WHEREAS, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized; and

WHEREAS, commercial whitewater recreation on the New River is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helping Fayette County attract businesses and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation in the New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy; and

WHEREAS, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit; and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years; and

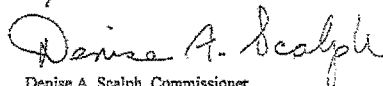
WHEREAS, establishment of a National Park designation for the New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Fayette County Commission this 17th day of August, 2018 urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner which:


- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create the New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

Fayette County Commission


Matthew D. Wender, President


Denise A. Scalph, Commissioner


John G. Bronzemen, Commissioner

<p>Jeffrey Morris Central District Supervisor</p> <p>Larry "Jay" Williams Eastern District Supervisor</p> <p>John Lawson Western District Supervisor</p>	<p>County of Giles</p>  <p>Board of Supervisors 315 NORTH MAIN STREET PEARISBURG, VIRGINIA 24134</p>	<p>Paul "Chappy" Baker At Large Supervisor</p> <p>Richard McCoy At Large Supervisor</p>
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**Resolution in Support of National Park Designation for
New River Gorge National River**

WHEREAS, the flowing waters of this ancient river provide solace to all those who seek her calming presence amongst the woods of West Virginia, and

WHEREAS, New River Gorge National River conserves over 70,000 acres of land along 53 miles of New River between the towns of Hinton and Fayetteville, and

WHEREAS, the park and surrounding area encompass a rugged, white water river, flowing northward through deep canyons, and

WHEREAS, the New River is among the oldest rivers on the continent and the park is rich in cultural and natural history that offer an abundance of scenic and recreational opportunities, and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National Rivers southern gateway lies in Summers County near the City of Hinton just north of the confluence of the New, Bluestone and Greenbrier River valleys, and

WHEREAS, Giles County and its regional partners within the aforesaid river valleys in West Virginia and Virginia are actively engaged in developing water and land based multi-use trails that as Mary Draper Ingles did follow the river into the New River Gorge, and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National River is a world-class destination for those seeking outdoor recreational activities in a four-season paradise, and

WHEREAS, outdoor enthusiast may engage in a plethora of actives including; picnicking, camping, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, equestrian and other existing authorized traditional uses that also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units, and

Telephone: (540) 921- 2525	Fax: (540) 921-1329
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WHEREAS, New River Gorge National River lies at the core of a globally significant forest containing the most diverse flora of any river gorge in central and southern Appalachia and provides essential habitat for endangered mammals and rare birds and amphibians, and

WHEREAS, New River Gorge National River has diverse and extraordinary scenic resources and views accessible to visitors from the river, rocky overlooks, trails, and rural roads throughout the park providing visitors with exceptional opportunities for exploration, adventure, discovery, solitude, and community, and

WHEREAS, the Bluestone National Scenic River; Gauley River National Recreation Area, Booker T. Washington National Monument, John Henry Historical Park and The Summit Bechtel Reserve National Scouting center are within the New River Gorge Region, and

WHEREAS, the rebranding of the New River Gorge National River creating the New River Gorge National Park will provide new economic and employment opportunities within Summers County, the City of Hinton as well as the greater New River Gorge Region, and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years, and

WHEREAS, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge National River in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will not only create additional economic benefits to the New River Gorge Region and the State of West Virginia, it will also strengthen the National Park Service's efforts to manage and develop the resources of the newly designated New River Gorge National Park.

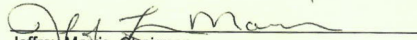
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Giles County Board of Supervisors urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue with great effort and determination legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as our nation's newest National Park; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that said legislation

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;

- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

The foregoing Resolution in Support was adopted by the Giles County Board of Supervisors at its regular meeting held on September 5, 2018, in Giles County, Virginia.


Jeffrey Morris, Chairman
Giles County Board of Supervisors



Post Office Box 9
Lansing, West Virginia 25862
304.574.2827 • Fax 304.574.2834
1.800.463.9873
raftinginfo.com

September 25, 2018

Please let this letter serve as my support for changing the New River Gorge National Recreation Area designation to the New River Gorge National Park.

I have been an outfitter on the New and Gauley Rivers for over 25 years including rafting, mountain biking and rock climbing. I am in a unique position to live, work, play, hunt and fish in and around these parklands - owning property in both the New and Gauley River Recreation Areas. Understanding the nuances and opportunities this change would present, I trust this would be beneficial for all park users.

The New River Gorge National Park would be a great asset to West Virginia from a marketing standpoint, improving the overall image of our state, while stimulating the economy. For this result, it is imperative that the opportunities for fishing and hunting in the parklands remain as they currently do. Likewise, it is important to my business that the WV DNR continues to oversee and regulate whitewater rafting, as they currently do if national park status is attained.

These uses are inextricably tied to the parklands and to the fabric of local West Virginia culture. I would be unable to support the proposed change in designation if hunting and fishing are not allowed to continue and if the WV DNR would not continue to regulate whitewater rafting.

I recognize the importance of maintaining the integrity of the parklands for future users. As a good steward for the last quarter-century, I strive to preserve and protect this amazing resource for future generations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of my position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Johnson", is written over a horizontal line. Below the signature, the name "Rick Johnson" and the title "President" are printed in a small, black, sans-serif font.

Rick Johnson
President

WEST VIRGINIA WHITEWATER — NEW & GAULEY RIVERS

From: Maura Kistler
Sent: Tuesday, September 17, 2019 1:19 PM
To: Eckerson, Mary (Capito)
Subject: National Park Re-Designation

Hey Mary Beth,
I hope you are well and managing to have some fun in the midst of all the work!

I wanted to take a quick minute to thank you and all of the folks in Senator Capito's office who are working so hard to make this New River National River re-designation a reality.

Here's why I am so excited:
Fayetteville is having a big ol season. All of our businesses are humming, our various housing options are filling up, and the friendly stoke abounds. We are killing it! For forty odd years we have been getting ready for our moment to truly shine on a national stage. We have worked hard. We are tourism pros. And we have fleshed out all the ancillary businesses we need to provide a world class tourism experience that matches our world class outdoor resources.

This is about pride for me. This is about WV getting its proper due. This re-designation will allow us to step up our entire program. We should. We are ready. Our resources and our state deserve this measure of respect which is part and parcel of the National Park and Preserve designation.

This is about the WV narrative and about claiming every opportunity we have to state unequivocally that the New River Gorge experience is huge and rich and wonderful. We must continue to find powerful vehicles that allow us to tell our story more effectively on a national stage; again, this re-designation provides this.

What we know is that nobody understands and appreciates the magic that is WV if they don't visit us. But once they do, we got em! This re-designation will bring us more of these potential converts and what we know from our experience here is that a certain small percentage of those converts will move heaven and earth to move here and be part of this place. It is working.

We appreciate all of your efforts so much. Let's do this!
One of these days we are gonna get you and the Senator on a rope--

Sincerely,
Maura Kistler

--
Maura Kistler
Water Stone Outdoors
Co-owner/Buyer
w: 304-574-2425
c: 304-663-1070

Mercer County Commission

1501 West Main, Suite 210
Princeton, West Virginia 24740

Phone: (304) 487-8306
Fax: (304) 487-8370
Email:
mercercocommission@frontiernet.net

VICKY REED
County Administrator



BILL ARCHER
1322 Woodrow Avenue
BLUEFIELD, WV 24701

GENE BUCKNER
118 Martingale Place
BLUEFIELD, WV 24701

GREG PUCKETT
334 Pine Acres Way
PRINCETON, WV 24739

Resolution in Support of Summers County's National Park Designation for New River Gorge National River

Whereas, southern West Virginia has been blessed with abundant natural resources and for nearly two centuries, those resources – timber, coal, oil and natural gas – have supplied the materials and fuel to transform the United States from an agrarian nation into a global super power; and

Whereas, while timber is a renewable resource, the coal, oil and natural gas resources are gone following extraction. When those reserves are depleted, the region's economy suffers. However, southern West Virginia's mountainous terrain as well as the region's rivers, streams and history constitute a precious resource that remains mostly undeveloped; and

Whereas, whitewater rafting and off-road trail riding are having a positive impact on the region, but people are also seeking out opportunities in what has become a growing regional trend of non-motorized range of outdoor activities that include hiking, mountain biking, kayaking, tubing and equestrian pursuits; and

Whereas, Mercer County is working with our neighbor in West Virginia, Summers County, as well as two neighboring Virginia counties – Tazewell and Giles counties – to promote regional river and stream-based tourism initiatives; and

Whereas, while Mercer County has only been blessed with three miles of the majestic New River within its boundaries, the New River flows through the heart of Summers County. This Commission thinks that Summers County's efforts to seek National Park designation for the entire New River is a worthwhile endeavor; and

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Mercer County Commission joins Summers County in urging the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue with great effort and determination, legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as our nation's newest National Park; and

Be It Further Resolved, That Said Legislation

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

This Resolution was duly discussed and adopted at a special meeting of the Mercer County Commission on the 11th day of September, 2018.

Mercer County Commission:


Gene Buckner, President


Greg Puckett, Commissioner


Bill Archer, Commissioner

**Resolution of the New River Gorge Convention & Visitors Bureau in Support of
National Park Designation for New River Gorge National River**

Whereas, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Gauley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs ; and

Whereas, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

Whereas, the National Park Service has promulgated special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails at New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated;

Whereas, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized;

Whereas, commercial whitewater recreation on the New River is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helps Fayette County attract businesses and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

Whereas, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation at New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy;

Whereas, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit;

Whereas, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years;

Whereas, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park;

Therefore, be it resolved that the New River Gorge Convention & Visitors Bureau urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner that:

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- continues to specifically authorize Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge as currently permitted as granted in WV S.B. 441 in 1990 and enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.



**Resolution of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority in
Support of National Park Designation for New River Gorge National
River**

Whereas, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Gauley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs ; and

Whereas, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

Whereas, the National Park Service has promulgated special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails at New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated;

Whereas, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized;

Whereas, commercial whitewater recreation in the New River Gorge region (Fayette, Nicholas, Raleigh and Summers counties) is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helps attract businesses and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

Whereas, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation at New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy;

Whereas, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit;

Whereas, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years;



Whereas, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park;

Therefore, be it resolved that the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner that:

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- continues to specifically authorize Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge as currently permitted as granted in WV S.B. 441 in 1990 and enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

County Commission of Raleigh County



*116 ½ North Heber Street
Beckley, West Virginia 25801-4522*



RESOLUTION OF THE RALEIGH COUNTY COMMISSION IN SUPPORT OF NATIONAL PARK DESIGNATION FOR NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER

Whereas, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Gauley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs; and

WHEREAS, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make New river Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

WHEREAS, the National Park Service has promulgated special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails at New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated;

WHEREAS, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized;

WHEREAS, commercial whitewater recreation on the New River is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helps Fayette County attract businesses

and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation at New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy;

WHEREAS, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit;

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years;

WHEREAS, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Raleigh County Commission urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner that;

- Retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;

- Retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorization;
- Continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping fish stocking and traditional uses in the National Park;
- Prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- Maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- Recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- Recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- Allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- Retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

FURTHER, RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution dated August 21, 2018, be sent to the following:

1. The Honorable Joe Manchin, III
United States Senate
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
2. The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senate
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

3. The Honorable Evan Jenkins
U. S. House of Representatives
1609 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
4. David Arnold,
Adventures on the Gorge
219 Chestnutburg Road
Lansing, WV 25862

**Adopted this the 21st day of August 2018, by the Raleigh County
Commission, Raleigh County, West Virginia
By:**


David L. Tolliver, President


Byrd E. White, III, Commissioner


Linda K. Epling, Commissioner

From: bakerspizza@gmail.com **On Behalf Of** Lewis Rhinehart
Sent: Thursday, September 12, 2019 11:02 AM
To: Boggs, Mara (Manchin) ; Eckerson, Mary (Capito)
Subject: New River Gorge National Park and Preserve

Good morning Senators Manchin and Capito. My name is Lewis Rhinehart and I own Secret Sandwich Society WV and The Grove WV in The Coolest Small Town in America, Fayetteville! Not only is Fayetteville the gateway to The New River Gorge we are leading the charge of an entrepreneurial and small business revitalization of Southern WV and statewide. We are in the middle of a renaissance of sorts and the designation change from National River to National Park and Preserve is something that the merchants and businesses of Fayetteville fully support. This year has been a watershed year for Fayetteville with many pieces of the puzzle falling into place to make for a vibrant arts, culture, dining and tourism scene. The additional attention, funding, diversity, and tourism that this designation would bring to the region would be a win for everyone involved. Something we like even more is the addition of "Preserve" to "National Park" similar to Denali National Park and Preserve which will ensure Hunters and Sportsmen the ability to hunt and fish in The Gorge with very little change in rules. Whitewater enthusiasts, rock climbers, mountain bikers, avid hikers, hunters, fishermen and everyday residents alike treasure the New River Gorge and treat it with respect and reverence. A National Park Designation just makes sense at this point!

I can't stress enough how much of a pleasure it is to see a Democrat and a Republican working together and leading the charge for something that would open the door even wider to the future for business, tourism and recreation in our great state of West Virginia!

Thank you for your hard work and please feel free to reach out or pay us a visit at Secret Sandwich Society the next time you are in town!

--

***Lewis M Rhinehart, President
Coralicious Incorporated D/B/A
Secret Sandwich Society
304-640-8152***



Bill Lightner
President
Jack David Woodrum
Commissioner
Tony Williams
Commissioner

Summers County Commission

120 Ballengee Street • Suite 203 • Hinton, WV 25951
Telephone: (304) 466-7100 • Fax: (304) 466-7146

Mary E. Merritt
Clerk

Resolution of the Summers County Commission

in Support of National Park Designation for New River Gorge National River

WHEREAS, the flowing waters of this ancient river provide solace to all those who seek her calming presence amongst the woods of West Virginia, and

WHEREAS, New River Gorge National River conserves over 70,000 acres of land along 53 miles of New River between the towns of Hinton and Fayetteville, and

WHEREAS, the park and surrounding area encompass a rugged, white water river, flowing northward through deep canyons, and

WHEREAS, the New River is among the oldest rivers on the continent and the park is rich in cultural and natural history that offer an abundance of scenic and recreational opportunities, and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National River's southern gateway lies in Summers County near the City of Hinton just north of the confluence of the New, Bluestone and Greenbrier River valleys, and

WHEREAS, Summers County and its regional partners within the aforesaid river valleys in West Virginia and Virginia are actively engaged in developing water and land based multi-use trails that as Mary Draper Ingles did, follow the river into the New River Gorge, and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National River is a world-class destination for those seeking outdoor recreational activities in a four-season paradise, and

WHEREAS, outdoor enthusiasts may engage in a plethora of activities including: picnicking, camping, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, equestrian and other existing authorized traditional uses that also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units, and

"Building a healthy, livable, prosperous, well-governed and unified Summers County"

WHEREAS, New River Gorge National River lies at the core of a globally significant forest containing the most diverse flora of any river gorge in central and southern Appalachia, and provides essential habitat for endangered mammals, rare birds and amphibians, and

WHEREAS, Bridge Day is West Virginia's largest single-day festival and one of the largest extreme sports events in the world where BASE jumpers, rappellers, and others from around the world entertain nearly 100,000 spectators from the New River Gorge Bridge – the world's second-longest single arch bridge, and

WHEREAS, Sandstone Falls, one of New River's most recognizable features, lies in the southern end of the New River Gorge National River along the scenic New River Parkway in Summers and Raleigh counties, and

WHEREAS, the New River Train showcases the New River Gorge National River by rail providing substantial economic impact to Summers County through the multi-day Hinton Railroad Days Festival and to the city of Huntington as the excursion train's point of embarkation, and

WHEREAS, New River Gorge National River has diverse and extraordinary scenic resources and views accessible to visitors from the river, rocky overlooks, trails, and rural roads throughout the park, providing visitors with exceptional opportunities for exploration, adventure, discovery, solitude, and community, and

WHEREAS, the Bluestone National Scenic River, Gauley River National Recreation Area, Booker T. Washington National Monument, John Henry Historical Park and The Summit Bechtel Reserve national Scouting center are within the New River Gorge Region, and

WHEREAS, the rebranding of the New River Gorge National River creating the New River Gorge National Park will provide new economic and employment opportunities within Summers County and the City of Hinton as well as the greater New River Gorge Region, and

WHEREAS, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years, and

WHEREAS, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge National River in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will not only create additional economic benefits to the New River Gorge Region and the State of West Virginia, it will also strengthen the National Park Service's efforts to manage and develop the resources of the New River Gorge National River through creation of the New River Gorge National Park. Now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Summers County Commission urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue with great effort and determination, legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as our nation's newest National Park, and, be it


FURTHER RESOLVED, that said legislation

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition, except—for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking, cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs, and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625, enacted in 1978, to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

We, the Commissioners of Summers County, duly discussed and adopted this resolution at a special meeting of the Summers County Commission on the twenty-third day of August, in the year of our Lord, twenty eighteen.


Bill Lightner, President


Jack David Woodrum, Commissioner


Tony Williams, Commissioner

I, Mary E. Merritt, County Clerk, certify that the above is a true copy of a Resolution adopted the 23rd day of August, 2018, at a regular commission meeting. I further certify that a quorum was present and a majority of its members voted affirmatively for this Resolution.


Mary E. Merritt, County Clerk

JDW/jdw

**Resolution of the West Virginia Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus in
Support of National Park Designation for New River Gorge National River**

Whereas, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Gauley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs; and

Whereas, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

Whereas, the National Park Service has promulgated special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails at New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated;

Whereas, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized;

Whereas, commercial whitewater recreation on the New River is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helps Fayette County attract businesses and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

Whereas, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation at New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy;

Whereas, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit;

Whereas, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years;

Whereas, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park;

Therefore, be it resolved that the West Virginia Association Convention & Visitors Bureau urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner that:

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- continues to specifically authorize Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge as currently permitted as granted in WV S.B. 441 in 1990 and enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

Respectfully,



Chris Richards
President, WVACVB

**Resolution of the West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association in Support of
National Park Designation for New River Gorge National River**

Whereas, the New River is one of the continent's oldest rivers with incomparable recreational and historical attractions, which, along with the Gauley River NRA and other National Park units in the area, account for over \$79 million in economic benefits and 2,400 jobs ; and

Whereas, fishing, hunting, trapping, climbing, bicycling, hiking, kayaking, rafting and other existing authorized traditional uses also provide important recreational benefits that make New River Gorge unique among National Park Service units; and

Whereas, the National Park Service has promulgated special regulations to allow the development of world-class mountain bike trails at New River Gorge which should be authorized and funded as promulgated;

Whereas, Bridge Day and associated base-jumping activities from the New River Gorge Bridge further highlight the depth and character of the New River Gorge area and should continue as currently authorized;

Whereas, commercial whitewater recreation on the New River is a great benefit to the quality of life in the area, helps Fayette County attract businesses and industry to our community, which also provides economic and employment opportunities; and

Whereas, the State of West Virginia has been authorized by Congress to manage commercial whitewater recreation at New River Gorge and that relationship with the National Park Service has provided important economic benefits to the local economy;

Whereas, the use of eminent domain to acquire land is and should continue to be prohibited except in circumstances where there are extraordinary threats to the Park unit;

Whereas, the New River Gorge National River has been providing benefits to the public and the citizens of West Virginia as a National Park unit for more than 40 years;

Whereas, establishment of a National Park designation for New River Gorge in a manner that retains and further promotes these remarkable attributes and uses will create additional economic benefits to the region and improve funding for management and development of the New River Gorge National Park;

Therefore, be it resolved that the West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association urges the West Virginia Congressional delegation to pursue legislation that designates the New River Gorge National River as a National Park in such a manner that:

- retains and continues state management of commercial whitewater recreation in the National Park;
- retains the management plans in effect at the time of enactment and specifies that nothing in the Park designation shall require elimination or modification of current uses and authorizations;
- continues to specifically authorize hunting, fishing, trapping, fish stocking, and traditional uses in the National Park;
- prohibits the use of eminent domain for land acquisition except ~~in~~ for extraordinary circumstances;
- maintains climbing, hiking and cycling and other recreational uses as important recreational benefits of the Park unit;
- recognizes and authorizes the special regulations that allow development of trails, mountain biking and other approved recreational uses in the National Park;
- recognize the rights of in-holders as granted in public law 95-625;
- allows inhabitants, heirs and assigns to continue to inhabit their property and requires they be paid fair market value upon acquisition;
- retains all other special provisions that are in public law 95-625 enacted in 1978 to create New River Gorge National River to the extent that those provisions are still applicable and appropriate.

House Concurrent Resolution 50

BY DELEGATES KESSINGER, CAPITO, HANSHAW (MR. SPEAKER),
 BARRETT, BATES, BIBBY, BYRD, CADLE, CAMPBELL, COOPER, CRISS,
 DEAN, ELLINGTON, ESPINOSA, FAST, FLEISCHAUER, GRAVES,
 HAMRICK, HANNA, HARDY, HARSHBARGER, HIGGINBOTHAM, HOTT,
 HOUSEHOLDER, HOWELL, D. JEFFRIES, J. JEFFRIES, JENNNINGS, D.
 KELLY, KUMP, LAVENDER-BOWE, LINVILLE, LOVEJOY, MALCOLM,
 MANDT, C. MARTIN, P. MARTIN, MAYNARD, NELSON, PACK, PHILLIPS,
 PORTERFIELD, ROBINSON, ROHRBACH, ROWAN, SHOTT, STEELE,
 STORCH, SUMMERS, SYPOLT, TONEY, WAXMAN AND WORRELL

Urging the United States Congress to designate the New River Gorge National River in West Virginia a national park.

Whereas, On October 2, 2018 West Virginia Senator Shelley Moore Capito introduced a bill, the New River Gorge National Park Designation Act, that would make the New River Gorge National River the New River Gorge National Park; and

Whereas, The New River Gorge National River has been a unit of the National Park Service since its creation in 1978; and

Whereas, The re-designation as a national park would not change the way the 72,808-acre preserve of canyons, cliffs, forested plateaus and whitewater rapids is currently managed, with hunting, rafting, fishing, bicycling and Bridge Day BASE-jumping that are permitted as "traditional" uses of the land; and

Whereas, The move to re-designate the Gorge as a national park was initiated by a group of whitewater outfitters, who saw the name change as a way to give the preserve a higher profile and attract more visitors, at virtually no cost, due to the National Park "brand" as an outdoor destination of choice; and

Whereas, In introducing the bill Senator Capito stated, "The New River Gorge is a special part of West Virginia and a real source of pride for our state. Whether it's cheering on the BASE jumpers at Bridge Day, experiencing the thrill of world-class whitewater rafting, or taking in the beautiful panoramic views, the New River Gorge provides unlimited opportunities for thousands of visitors each year;" and

Whereas, A study completed in May of 2018 for a proposal to re-designate New Mexico's White Sands National Monument as a national park showed that eight former national monuments that had become national parks during the previous five years had experienced average increases in visitors of 21 percent; and

2/20/2020

www.wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Text_HTML/2019_sessions/RS/bills/hcr50_intr.htm

Whereas, Senator Capito further said, "Re-designating the national river as a national park will shine a light on the New River Gorge and its many offerings to help drive tourism and spur the local and regional economy;" and

Whereas, While national monuments may be become national parks through presidential designation, it takes an act of Congress to bring national park status to national rivers; and

Whereas, Due to its unique geology and its significance to the State of West Virginia and the nation, the New River Gorge National River warrants elevation to the status, protections and impact to the local economy that being designated a national park brings to it; therefore, be it

Resolved by the Legislature of West Virginia:

That the Legislature hereby urges the United States Congress to designate the New River Gorge National River in West Virginia the New River Gorge National Park; and, be it

Further Resolved, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates forward a copy of this resolution to the representatives and senators elected by the citizens of West Virginia in the Congress of the United States in Washington, D. C.

Senator CAPITO. Okay, in any event, these——

Senator MANCHIN. Without any objections.

Senator CAPITO. This is serious. These letters, I think, represent voices of how this change would draw more tourists, and we are going to hear about this, outdoor recreationalists and others, and encourage more Americans to come and enjoy the beauty that we see here in our state.

As many of you know, last November, as a response to all this, I introduced a much different bill, broader bill, that would have only changed the entire park to just a national park. But I knew, and I had specific language in there that said that we could preserve the hunting and fishing parameters that we had had in the national river but, as many of you know, in national parks, hunting is not permitted. So this, I think, approach is much, much improved, and we have talked a lot about this, a much more viable alternative.

In addition to the meeting in December 2018, we had a sportsmen roundtable with Senator Manchin at the headquarters with seven sportsmen's groups and past DNR Commissioners to keep everyone apprised. But we learned at that meeting that some people were still taken by surprise by this——

Senator MANCHIN. Right.

Senator CAPITO. ——that they felt like they had not been quite informed as to what was going on. So then we held a public meeting at the Canyon Rim Visitor Center in October, this last October. I think this legislation, as it is being worked, balances the interests of all diverse stakeholders to create a robust national park worthy of the title and preserving the right to hunt in nearly 64,500 acres.

Under the current statute, hunting must be permitted in at least a portion of the national river area, but the amount of acreage is not specifically defined right now. There is nothing in the current statute that expresses Congressional intent on how much land should be open for hunting and where that land should be. The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Designation Act provides specific protections for hunting and fishing in the 64,495 acre preserve, recognizing that we, as Members of Congress, intend for this land to be permanently available to our sportsmen.

As it exists now in this bill, 7,691 acres of the national park will incorporate the most scenic overlooks and historic elements of the New River Gorge and maximize the availability to visitors from around West Virginia and outside of West Virginia to maximize their enjoyment. This redesignation will give the area's economy a much-needed boost by raising national awareness of a site that encapsulates and makes West Virginia wild and wonderful.

I look forward to the discussion today. I would like to thank all of the members of my staff and the staff that came from Washington to move forward. With this, I look forward to the rest of the meeting.

Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Senator. I appreciate it.

Let me explain to you how the timing works too. We have Darla here and Darla runs the Committee. Basically what she does, she keeps us on time. The reason for the timing, and if you have ever watched us on television, you will see it, we always have these in

front of us when we are talking and we have it right now at five minutes. So each one of our witnesses will have five minutes. You will see it go to a yellow, that means you are coming down to the last minute and then, red.

Not to be rude, I don't want to be rude, whatsoever, but I will say your time has elapsed and hopefully you all will understand at that time, you know, kind of, wrap it up, but if you watch this, so when you all are talking, the same thing. If someone is up there when your two minutes, when it starts getting close within 30 seconds, this will come on, the yellow and then the red and at that time I would have to ask you if you could continue to wrap this up so we have as much participation as possible.

With that, let me start with our witnesses and welcome them and introduce them to you.

Providing testimony for the Administration is Lizzie Watts. I think most people know Lizzie here. She is the Superintendent of the New River Gorge National River. I want to thank Lizzie and all the National Park Service (NPS) staff for their work over many months to help us identify options—and I repeat, options—for possible designation of the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve.

To provide some additional perspectives, we have witnesses from a variety of backgrounds.

Chelsea Ruby—Chelsea, if you will raise your hand there. Chelsea is basically the Director of the West Virginia Tourism Commission. She is here to provide the state's perspective on the recreation economy.

Next to Chelsea we have Jerod Harman. Jerod is President of the West Virginia Wildlife Federation. He is here with us today to give some perspective from the hunting and sportsmen's communities.

And then we have Rick Johnson. Rick is a resident of Oak Hill, West Virginia, and the owner of River Expeditions, a lodge and outfitter that operates rafting trips on the New River.

I want to thank each and every one of you, again, for being here and giving of your time and your expertise. Lizzie, we are going to start with you.

STATEMENT OF LIZZIE WATTS, SUPERINTENDENT, NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Ms. WATTS. Good morning, folks. I, too, want to take just a second to thank everybody for coming. This has been a group effort and we really do, we're very thrilled with how many people want to say and want to share their opinions because it will make it all better in the long run, but we really do appreciate you coming today.

Ranking Member Manchin and Senator Capito, I thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on Senate bill 2555, to designate the New River Gorge National River here in the State of West Virginia as the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. We do not object to the naming of the New River Gorge National River as the National River Gorge National Park and Preserve with hunting allowed in only the areas designated as the preserve as this bill would do.

But we would like to continue to work with you and the members of the Committee on suggested alternatives. The Department appreciates that you, the sponsors of this legislation, and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee share our interest in adhering to the longstanding precedent and traditions in the designation of the units of National Park System. We appreciate your efforts to avoid naming areas where hunting is allowed as a national park. To do so would not only, would not be consistent with the National Park Service and Congressional precedence. The National Park Service presented options to you for your consideration last spring, and we present them again here today.

Option one is to informally rather than statutorily refer to the New River Gorge National River, the Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River as National Parks of Southern West Virginia. Signs, brochures and marketing materials could be used to use that name. It is the same approach actually being used in other park groups, including the National Parks of New York Harbor, the National Parks of Eastern North Carolina, the National Parks of Western Pennsylvania and the National Mall and Memorial Parks. These parks grouped capitalize on proximity to markets, to market their units within the context of their geographic areas. No legislation would be required to adopt this approach and the principal benefit of this approach is that it offers the use of the name national park and a little NP brand without adhering to and without affecting hunting.

Another option would be to designate the entire New River Gorge National River as the New River Gorge National Recreation Area. Such a designation would be consistent with the standard NPS nomenclature for units that allow hunting as well as other recreational activities. It would have no effect or little effect on the hunting opportunities. Other areas, such as that national recreation area in the National Park System, include Lake Mead, Glen Canyon and Delaware Water Gap. Of course, of the options, that would redesignate New River Gorge by statute. This alternative is the most consistent with the National Park Service management of similar units.

The legislation under discussion today is largely similar to the options developed by the National Park Service to designate the New River Gorge National River as New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. In this proposal, the National Park part of the unit would be designated for four, non-contiguous areas that encompass approximately 7,000 acres of land and reflects the most scenic and historically significant portions of the park as is the standard for all areas that are designated national parks. The National Preserve portion of the unit would encompass the balance of land within the present boundary, approximately 64,495 acres. A concern that has been raised is that it would close approximately 4,385 acres where hunting is presently allowed and would change access to a couple of popular hunting areas.

The last option we presented would also designate the New River Gorge National River as the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve but with fewer acres designated as national park—this proposal identifies five, non-contiguous areas comprised of about 1,800 acres that are already closed to hunting. The National Park

Preserve would encompass the remaining 70,000. This alternative would not affect hunting opportunities, however, with the exception of Canyon Rim, it does not set aside the most significant natural and scenic and biological resources as the National Park in the national park area.

The Department would like to continue to work with you and the other members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to try to solve any or issues around S. 2555.

Ranking Member Manchin and Senator Capito, this concludes my statement, and I would please to answer any questions you have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Watts follows:]

STATEMENT OF LIZZIE WATTS, SUPERINTENDENT, NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING S. 2555, TO REDESIGNATE THE NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL RIVER IN THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA AS THE “NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE”.

February 22, 2020

Ranking Member Manchin and Senator Capito, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior’s views on S. 2555, to designate New River Gorge National River in the State of West Virginia as the “New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.” It is a pleasure to have you here at the National Park System site that you have proposed to redesignate.

The Department appreciates that you, the sponsors of S. 2555, and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee share our interest in adhering to longstanding precedents and traditions in the designation of units of the National Park System. We appreciate your effort to avoid naming areas where hunting is allowed as a “national park”; to do so would not be consistent with the National Park Service (NPS) and Congressional precedent. We do not object to naming New River Gorge National River as “New River Gorge National Park and Preserve” with hunting allowed in only the areas designated as “preserve,” as S. 2555 would do, but we would like to continue to work with you and Members of the Committee on suggested alternatives.

During the 115th Congress, the Department testified on S. 3534, which would have redesignated New River Gorge National River as “New River Gorge National Park.” We noted that while New River Gorge National River contains spectacular features that rival those in units designated as national parks, Congress, with the support of the Department, has reserved the title of “national park” for units where hunting is not authorized. Units where hunting is allowed are typically designated as “preserves,” “national recreation areas”, or, depending on their location, “national seashores” or “national lakeshores.” Some areas of the National Park System have both a “national park” and a “national preserve” associated with them in order to separate the areas where hunting is, and is not, permitted. Denali National Park and Preserve in Alaska is such an example. In testimony, we indicated our support for S. 3534 if amended to redesignate New River Gorge National River with a title that is in keeping with standard NPS nomenclature, and offered to work with both of you on alternative designations. After the hearing, we prepared maps and other materials to discuss four options with your offices. We present them again here:

National Parks of Southern West Virginia – This alternative proposed informally, rather than statutorily, referring to New River Gorge National River, the Gauley River National Recreation Area, and Bluestone National Scenic River, as the “National Parks of Southern West Virginia.” Signs, brochures, and marketing materials could use that name. It is the same approach that is being used for other park groups, including the National Parks of New York Harbor, the National Parks of Eastern North Carolina, the National Parks of Western Pennsylvania, and the National Mall and Memorial Parks. These park groups capitalize on proximity to market their park units

within the context of their geographic area. No legislation would be required to adopt this approach, although the House and Senate could pass a Sense of Congress resolution urging adoption of the use of this name to collectively identify the three parks. This alternative could be central to reinvigorating a previous local effort to promote the region through the National Parks of Southern West Virginia. The principal benefit of this approach is that it offers the use of the “national park” brand without affecting hunting opportunities.

New River Gorge National Recreation Area – This alternative proposed renaming the entire New River Gorge National River as the “New River Gorge National Recreation Area.” Such a designation would be consistent with standard NPS nomenclature for units that allow hunting and well as other recreation activities, and it would have no effect on hunting opportunities. Many of the most popular large natural areas managed by the NPS are designated as national recreation areas, such as Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, and Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. Of the options that would redesignate New River Gorge by statute, this alternative is the most consistent with NPS management of similar units.

New River Gorge National Park & Preserve II – This is the alternative that is largely presented in this bill. We refer to it as number “II” because it was identified that way on the maps the NPS prepared to illustrate this proposal. In this proposal, the “National Park” part of the unit would be designated for four non-contiguous areas that encompass approximately 7,691 acres of land and reflect the most scenic and historically significant portions of the park, as is standard for areas designated as national parks. The “National Preserve” portion of the unit would encompass the balance of the land within the present boundary, approximately 64,495 acres. This alternative would affect hunting opportunities by closing approximately 4,385 acres where hunting is presently allowed and would change access to some popular hunting areas.

New River Gorge National Park & Preserve I – Under the alternative we refer to as “National Park & Preserve I,” the “National Park” would encompass five, non-contiguous areas comprised of the 1,815 acres that are already closed to hunting. The “National Preserve” would encompass the remaining 70,371 acres of lands within the present boundary. This alternative would not affect hunting opportunities. However, with the exception of Canyon Rim, it does not include the most significant areas of the park among the areas that would have national park status.

The Department would like to continue to work with you and the other members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee as you try to resolve the issues surrounding S. 2555.

Ranking Member Manchin and Senator Capito, this concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Lizzie. Chelsea, you will be next. If you will, please give us your perspective from the economic side.

**STATEMENT OF CHELSEA A. RUBY, TOURISM COMMISSIONER,
WEST VIRGINIA TOURISM OFFICE, WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

Ms. RUBY. Sure.

Good morning, Ranking—

Senator MANCHIN. Chelsea, if you will pull that up close to you.

Ms. RUBY. There we go.

Alright, good morning, Ranking Member Manchin, Senator Capito. It's an honor to be here today to talk about the proposed New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. I want to thank you both for holding this hearing about what is a tremendous opportunity for West Virginia. I'm the envy of my counterparts in other states today. As you all know, national parks are the gold standard for tourism and I can tell you, without hesitation, that my counterparts in the other 20 states that don't have national parks, they would love to be having this conversation this morning. So I want to thank you both for looking at this important piece of legislation.

On behalf of Governor Justice, I want to begin by saying that the State of West Virginia strongly supports the creation of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. The Gorge is one of West Virginia's most beautiful and iconic places with its wild rapids, rugged mountains and majestic views. It's those very mountains and majestic views that have led us to talking about the potential growth there has been in West Virginia's tourism industry for years. I know this community knows about the impact of tourism in West Virginia, but you might not know the sheer magnitude or the growth in recent years.

Tourism in West Virginia is a \$4.6 billion industry. It supports more than 45,000 jobs, and the best news is that it's growing. Our last economic impact report showed growth in all nine travel regions in West Virginia. Our growth over the last two years, we've seen 9.9 percent increases in travel or spending. We are outpacing the national rate of growth for tourism by 58 percent. We're becoming a national leader, and I believe that we're just getting started. There's a lot more that we can do.

Designating this area as a national park will generate significant and immediate boost to tourism here. For many travelers, the national park designation is a kind of seal of approval. It's the confirmation that a designation that this place would be one of the nation's greatest places and that it's a place you need to see. The New River Gorge certainly deserves to be recognized as one of those places and when it is, we expect that we will see double-digit increases in visitation right away. Having this designation will immediately put us on the map for a whole new group of people.

Last year the National Park Service saw over 319 million visitors and park designations, or redesignations, result in huge boosts. For example, the most recent one was in Indiana, the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore was changed over to the Indiana Dunes National Park. As soon as that happened, they started seeing record-breaking attendance. According to the Associated Press, in July, just after it was redesignated, their attendance doubled. It grew by

over 50,000 visitors in one month, that was looking at July to the previous July. This designation has brought national and international attention to Porter, Indiana. Imagine what this attention could do for West Virginia. It has a huge potential to greatly expand the state's tourism economy and brand us as a major tourism destination on the East Coast. If you look at a map of national parks, you see there are many of them on the West Coast, but we don't have as many on the East Coast so this would be an exciting thing for the entire region.

We, at the West Virginia Tourism Office, stand ready to launch a major marketing campaign to promote the park as soon as it's created. Governor Justice and our legislature have invested significantly more resources in tourism over the past couple of years. Just last year, the tourism budget in West Virginia was tripled. We had one of the highest budget increases in the country so we stand ready and able to assist with this as soon as a designation is changed. We also would be able to help with the economic development that I believe would happen as soon as this designation were to be changed. So if you look at areas where the designations have changed or national parks have been created, existing businesses expand, new businesses come in and I'm happy to tell you that in West Virginia, we have one of the best tax credit programs in the nation for incentivizing tourism development. It's given us commitments of more than \$240 million of new projects that will be coming over the next couple of years. So we stand ready to assist with that as well.

I'm happy to take questions, but I want to end by saying this. The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve will be transformative for this region and the entire state. It's impossible for me to overstate what a positive difference this will make. If any site in the country is worthy of this designation, it's the New River Gorge.

Thank you, Senator Capito, for beginning this process in 2018, and thanks to both of you for supporting this current bill and for your support of the park and preserve. This is a wonderful chance to benefit our state and to bring this magnificent area the recognition it deserves.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ruby follows:]



U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources 2/22/2020 Field Hearing

Prepared remarks for West Virginia Tourism Commissioner Chelsea A. Ruby

Good morning, Senator Manchin, Senator Capito, it's an honor to be here today to talk about the proposed New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. I want to thank you for holding this hearing to talk about what is a tremendous opportunity for West Virginia. On behalf of Governor Justice, I want to begin by saying that the state of West Virginia strongly supports the creation of West Virginia's first national park and preserve.

The New River Gorge is one of West Virginia's most beautiful and iconic places, with its wild rapids, rugged mountains, and majestic views. It has enormous potential to grow as a tourist destination and to help lift the economy in this region and the state as a whole. Designating it a national park will generate a significant and immediate boost in tourism here. For many travelers, the national park designation is a kind of seal of approval, confirmation that a destination is one of our nation's great places, that it's someplace they need to see. The New River Gorge certainly deserves to be recognized as one of those places, and when it is, we expect that we'll see a double-digit increase in visitation right away. And that will translate into a major economic impact, with visitors rafting, dining, shopping, staying in hotels, hunting, fishing, and visiting other destinations around the state as part of their trip to the park.

West Virginia needs that economic growth. We're working hard to continue diversifying our state's economy, and tourism, more and more, is a key economic pillar for the state. West Virginia tourism is a \$4.6 billion industry. Growing that number has been a top priority for Governor Justice, and over the past two years, our tourism sector has grown 9.9%. Last year, we grew more than 50% faster than the national average. Tourism supports more than 45,000 West Virginia jobs and provides more than \$500 million in state and local tax revenue. Establishing this park will mean more jobs for West Virginians and more revenue for governments to provide needed services.

The West Virginia Tourism Office stands ready to launch a major marketing campaign to promote the park as soon as it is created. Governor Justice and our Legislature have invested significantly more resources in tourism marketing in recent years, and the state is well positioned to let the rest of America know about a new park. It would immediately become the centerpiece of our tourism advertising.

If the park is created, we also expect that new businesses will develop around it to offer more activities and lodging, and existing businesses will expand. The state is ready to support them, as well. Our Tourism Development Act offers tax credits for new or expanding tourism-related businesses. Thanks in part to the tax credit, we already have more than \$240 million in tourism development projects planned around the state. And we look



forward to seeing a constellation of new economic development emerging to surround and complement this park.

In sum, creating the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve will be transformative for this region and for the entire state. It's impossible to overstate what a positive difference this will make. If any site in the country is worthy of this recognition, it's the New River Gorge. Thank you, Senator Capito, for beginning this process in 2018, and thanks to both of you for sponsoring the current bill and for your support of the park and preserve. This is a wonderful chance to benefit our state and to bring this magnificent area the recognition it deserves.

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Senator MANCHIN. Thank you. Now we will go to Jerod Harman, President of the West Virginia Wildlife Federation.
Mr. Harman.

**STATEMENT OF JEROD HARMAN, PRESIDENT,
WEST VIRGINIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION**

Mr. HARMAN. Thank you, Senators Capito and Manchin, for allowing me to speak on behalf of the sportsmen this morning. I'm going to try my best to address some things shortly. I don't think I'll need five minutes. So maybe if someone runs over, they can have a few seconds of my time.

I appreciate the opportunity that our sportsmen's organizations had to be a part of this process and to communicate openly with our senators in attempts to create the New River National Park and Preserve. We worked diligently to make reasonable requests that made common sense. Simply put, our requests were to make the New River Gorge area better for the sportsmen and to be considerate of all visitors. Unfortunately, we did not get what we asked for in order to gain support from the sportsmen for this proposal.

Sportsmen and sportswomen and our youth would give up a lot of good hunting ground if this proposal passes. This is a major problem with our sportsmen. Additionally, the future regulations for privately-owned land within park boundaries are now in question and that is not acceptable to the landowners and the sportsmen who hunt there. We asked for trapping to be permitted, and it was not. There's no exception, necessarily, for archery, and we'd like to see something spelled out within the 500-foot boundaries on that.

The potential exists for user fees within the new national park designation and this creates yet another concern for the sportsmen. Also, the possible new jurisdiction for outfitters for hunting and fishing around the New River would create additional and unnecessary red tape for them.

These are just some of our concerns that sportsmen's groups need addressed for our support of a national park and preserve designation. Our simple requests have not been met, and the loss of additional hunting ground and potential access is completely unacceptable to the sportsmen and sportsmen's groups. We, the sportsmen, are going to be some of the biggest losers, and we strongly oppose the designation for the New River Gorge. Should changes be made to the proposal that support the sportsmen's request and could potentially get us all on common ground, we very much look forward to receiving them for consideration.

We thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harman follows:]

JEROD HARMAN

PRESIDENT, WEST VIRGINIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Written Testimony on S. 2555

The proposed "New River Gorge National Park and Preserve" designation

I appreciate the opportunity that our sportsmen's organizations had to be a part of this process and to communicate openly with our Senators in attempts to create the New River National Park and Preserve. We worked diligently to make reasonable requests that made common sense. Simply put, our requests were to make the New River Gorge area better for the sportsmen and be considerate to all visitors. Unfortunately, we did not get what we asked for in order to gain support from the sportsmen for the proposal.

Sportsmen and women, and our youth would give up a lot of good hunting ground if this proposal passes. This is a major problem with our sportsmen. Additionally, the future regulations for privately owned land within park boundaries are now in question and that is not acceptable to the landowners and the sportsmen who hunt there. We asked for trapping to be permitted, and it was not. There is no exception for archery hunting in the language of the 500' barrier, and that should be favorably considered.

The potential exists for user fees within the new National Park designation, and this creates yet another concern for the sportsmen. Also, new jurisdiction of the outfitters for hunting and fishing around the New River would create additional and unnecessary red-tape.

These are some of the concerns that the sportsmen's groups needed to be addressed for our support of a National Park and Preserve designation. Our simple requests have not been met, and the loss of additional hunting ground and potential access is completely unacceptable to the sportsmen. We, the sportsmen, are going to be some of the biggest losers, and we strongly oppose the designation change for the New River Gorge.

Should changes be made to the proposal that support the sportsmen's requests and could potentially get us all on common ground, we look forward to receiving them for consideration.

Sincerely,

Jerod Harman

President

WV Wildlife Federation

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Harman.

Our panel will conclude with Mr. Rick Johnson. Rick is a resident of Oak Hill, and he is the owner of River Expeditions.

Rick, do you want to pull that a little closer to you? Yes.

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD "RICK" A. JOHNSON,
OWNER, RIVER EXPEDITIONS**

Mr. JOHNSON. Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Senators Capito and Manchin and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, for inviting me and holding this hearing in West Virginia. I'm Rick Johnson. My wife and I own River Expeditions in Fayette County, West Virginia. I'm an anomaly in the rafting industry having formerly been a coal operator; managed timber properties; as well as being an avid sportsman. I live and work in West Virginia by choice.

Southern West Virginia, since the late 1800s, has relied on the coal industry for its jobs and economic prosperity. This has changed. Tourism has become the new economic engine in the area. We all agree that Southern West Virginia faces challenges, high unemployment from lost coal-related jobs, drug abuse, diminishing population. How can we keep families here in the short-term while retaining high school and college graduates for tomorrow's workforce?

We recognize the need for an economic driver that will grow the region's economy by providing jobs and tax revenue. As you know, the New River Gorge National River has been under the National Park Service umbrella since 1978. This has been a mutually beneficial partnership for everyone. We are thankful to Congress and Ray Hall and Senator Byrd, who had the foresight to designate these three national recreation areas in Southern West Virginia. Now is the time to expand the realm of the national river area, one national river area getting the designation of the National Park and Preserve. We believe this to be the resource which economic, historic and environmental sustainability will come together for the greater good of the region, state and nation. It is time for West Virginia to finally have a national park. We would join an elite group, some of the most cherished natural wonders in the country which number only 62, and take our place alongside parks such as Denali and Yosemite.

Under the new designation everything will remain the same concerning rules and regulations—it's simply a name change. This is a win-win for everyone. The synergy between the National Park Service and the West Virginia DNR and the park users will remain unchanged. Research supports the fact that national parks nationwide are an economic engine. The potential is unlimited in Southern West Virginia, but sources report an average of 21 percent increase in visitation in new parks.

The most visited park in North America is in Appalachia. It's the Great Smoky Mountains National Park with over 11 million visitors annually which is almost double the number of visitors for the next closest park which is the Grand Canyon, one of the modern seven wonders of the world. Just think what a national park designation could do for Southern West Virginia, one of the most economically depressed areas in America but within six hours drive of

42 million people. Tourism is the only resource that has ever existed in Central Appalachia where all the money stays here, not going out of state and this resource renews itself every day.

I'm a lifelong hunter and member and donor of the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Safari Club International, National Rifle Association and America Outdoors. I've always been an ethical hunter following and respecting rules and regulations and the rights of landowners. This is why I've always found it odd that folks have a strange attachment to land they've never owned. Generations of people in the area have broken the law trespassing on land that was privately owned by hunting, fishing and camping, almost as if it were an entitlement. It was not until the Park Service purchased the land in the late '70s that it became legally accessible to everyone. In fact, without the purchase of this land by the Park Service, there would be little or no public land to hunt on in this area since currently most of the large tracts of land have been leased by private hunting clubs.

There are currently several areas in the New River Gorge National River that are closed to hunting, but there may be an additional small area proposed, in the new proposed park. This area is so small in acreage it's inconsequential that tens of thousands of acres that the Park Service is explicitly leaving open to hunting in perpetuity. A friend of mine who does not hunt asked me recently what part of the park he could hike on with his grandkids during hunting season without disturbing hunters and avoiding the danger of being shot. I told him while there were over 64,000 acres within the proposed park and preserve that allowed hunting, there would be several thousand acres that weren't open to hunting so people who didn't hunt but wanted to enjoy the park could do so safely and without worry. It was then it occurred to me how selfish we are as hunters that protecting every acre of hunting land without any consideration for those who don't hunt that are also entitled to enjoy the same beauty and resources we take for granted. And for this I was almost embarrassed and a little ashamed.

In closing, I support, I'm in support of the park and preserve designation and welcome opportunity for increased visitation and economic development. The new designation will foster good stewardship, ultimately exposing future generations of this region to our country. Thanks again, Senators Manchin and Capito, for your vision to create a national park in West Virginia and allowing me to testify.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Johnson follows:]

**TESTIMONY OF RICHARD A. JOHNSON
OWNER, RIVER EXPEDITIONS, FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
FIELD HEARING: "THE NEW RIVER GORGE PARK & PRESERVE"
DESIGNATION ACT
FEBRUARY 22, 2020**

Good Morning - Thank you Senators Capito and Machin and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for inviting me and holding this hearing in West Virginia. I'm Rick Johnson - my wife and I own River Expeditions located in Fayette County, West Virginia. I am an anomaly in the rafting industry having formerly been a coal operator; managed timber properties; as well as being an avid sportsman. I live and work in West Virginia by choice.

Southern West Virginia since the late 1800's has relied on the coal industry for jobs and economic prosperity. Mines once numbering in the hundreds and employees numbering in the thousands has become only a shadow of its former self now numbering in the single digits and employing in the hundreds. Tourism has become the new economic engine in the area.

We all agree that Southern West Virginia faces difficult challenges: high unemployment from lost coal-related jobs, drug abuse, diminishing population, etc. How can we keep families here in the short term while retaining high school and college graduates for tomorrow's workforce?

We recognize the need for an economic driver that will grow the region's economy, by providing jobs and tax revenue thus stimulating the local and state economies. As you know, the New River Gorge National River has been under the National Park Service umbrella since 1978. This has been a mutually beneficial partnership for Park Staff, Park Users and the area - we are thankful to Congressman Rahall and Senator Byrd who had the foresight to designate three national recreation areas in Southern West Virginia.

Now is the time to expand the realm of one of these national river areas, giving it the designation of a National Park & Preserve. We believe this to be the resource for which economic, historic and environmental sustainability will come together for the greater good of the region, state and nation. It's time for West Virginia to finally have a National Park and be recognized as one of the true gems within the national park system. We would join an elite group of some of the most cherished natural wonders in the country (which number only 62) and take our place alongside parks such as Denali and Yosemite.

Under the new designation, everything will remain the same concerning rules and regulations - it's simply a name change. This is a win-win for everyone. The synergy between National Park Service, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and Park Users will remain unchanged.

Research supports the fact that Parks nationwide with far fewer opportunities for recreation report some of the highest visitation, as well as visitor spending and economic output. Can you

imagine what the impact to the New River Gorge National Park & Preserve could yield? The potential is unlimited but sources report an average of 21%¹ increase in visitation alone. Now this is something we can all support.

The most visited park in America is in Appalachia - the Great Smokey Mountains National Park, with over 11 million visitors annually which is double the number of visitors from the next closest park which is the Grand Canyon, one of the modern seven wonders of the world. Just think what a national park designation could do for Southern West Virginia, one of the most economically depressed areas in our country, but within six hours drive of over 42 million people.

Tourism is the only resource that has ever existed in Central Appalachia where all the money stays here not going out of state. This vital resource renews itself each day. Packed with world class whitewater rafting, rock climbing, mountain biking, hiking trails and beautiful vistas, the New River Gorge has long been an adventure destination for nature lovers and outdoor sports enthusiasts.

I am a lifelong hunter and member and donor of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Safari Club International, National Rifle Association and America Outdoors. I have always been an ethical hunter following and respecting all rules and regulations, never trespassing or violating the rights of land owners. This is why I have always found it odd that folks have a strange attachment to land they have never owned. Generations of people in the area have broken the law trespassing on land that was privately owned by hunting, fishing and camping almost as if it were an entitlement. It was not until the park service purchased this land in the late 1970's that it became legally accessible to everyone. In fact, without this purchase of land by the park service there would be little to no public land to hunt on in this area since most of the large tracts of private land have been leased by private member-only hunting clubs.

There are currently several areas in the New River Gorge National River that are closed to hunting but there may be an additional small area which may be closed in the proposed new Park and Preserve. This area is so small in acreage that it is inconsequential to the tens of thousands of acres that the park service is explicitly leaving open to hunting in perpetuity.

A friend of mine who does not hunt asked me what part of the park he could hike on with his grandkids during hunting season without disturbing hunters and avoiding the danger of being shot. I had never considered this question before and after some thought I told him that while there are over 66,000 acres within the proposed Park and Preserve that allowed hunting, there would be a few thousand acres that weren't open to hunting so people who didn't hunt but liked to enjoy the Park could do so safely and without worry. It then occurred to me how selfish we as hunters are at protecting every acre of hunting land without any consideration for those who don't hunt but are also entitled to enjoy the beauty and resources we take for granted every day. And for this I was almost embarrassed and a little ashamed.

¹ <https://headwaterseconomics.org/public-lands/protected-lands/national-monuments-redesignated-national-parks/>

In closing, I am in support of the Park & Preserve designation and welcome the opportunity for increased visitation and economic development. This new designation will foster good stewardship, ultimately exposing future generations to this region of our country. Thanks again to Senators Manchin and Capito for their vision to create a National Park in West Virginia and for allowing me to testify.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you all.

Now we will go into our question part of the hearing, and I will explain how we will do this. I will start with questions first, and then Senator Capito will have her questions, then I will open it up to the audience. We have a mic down front, and we have portable mics. Who has the portable mics?

Okay, Terri, right there. Do we have any others?

Ms. BERKLEY. That's also a portable—

Senator MANCHIN. Okay.

Ms. BERKLEY. This one over here.

Senator MANCHIN. So we have this one here if you can get in front. If you can't, raise your hand. Terri will get to you, we will get you a mic.

Also what we are going to do, David Brooks—David, if you will stand?

David Brooks, basically, has over 30 years' experience. He has written about every piece of legislation that deals with a national park or preserve in the entire United States. So he has more experience working with Senator Murkowski's staff, but David has been on the front of this for many, many years so we have an expert here. He will point out as we are talking, and a question might be asked and someone starts answering and talking about a certain part, David will try to point it out with a laser so you can follow along.

At any time if something doesn't make sense or something after a person is done asking a question, please raise your hand. I will try to acknowledge it so we can get clarification if you need it.

Basically, all the comments you make are for the record. Us giving you our opinion doesn't, at this point in time, we are going to ask our questions which, I think, hopefully, we can answer through the question and answer period. This all gets put into the record which goes to Washington. So that is when we really do the mark-up, finding out the facts that we are going to be dealing with.

With that, I am going to start with my questions first, and I have a few to ask.

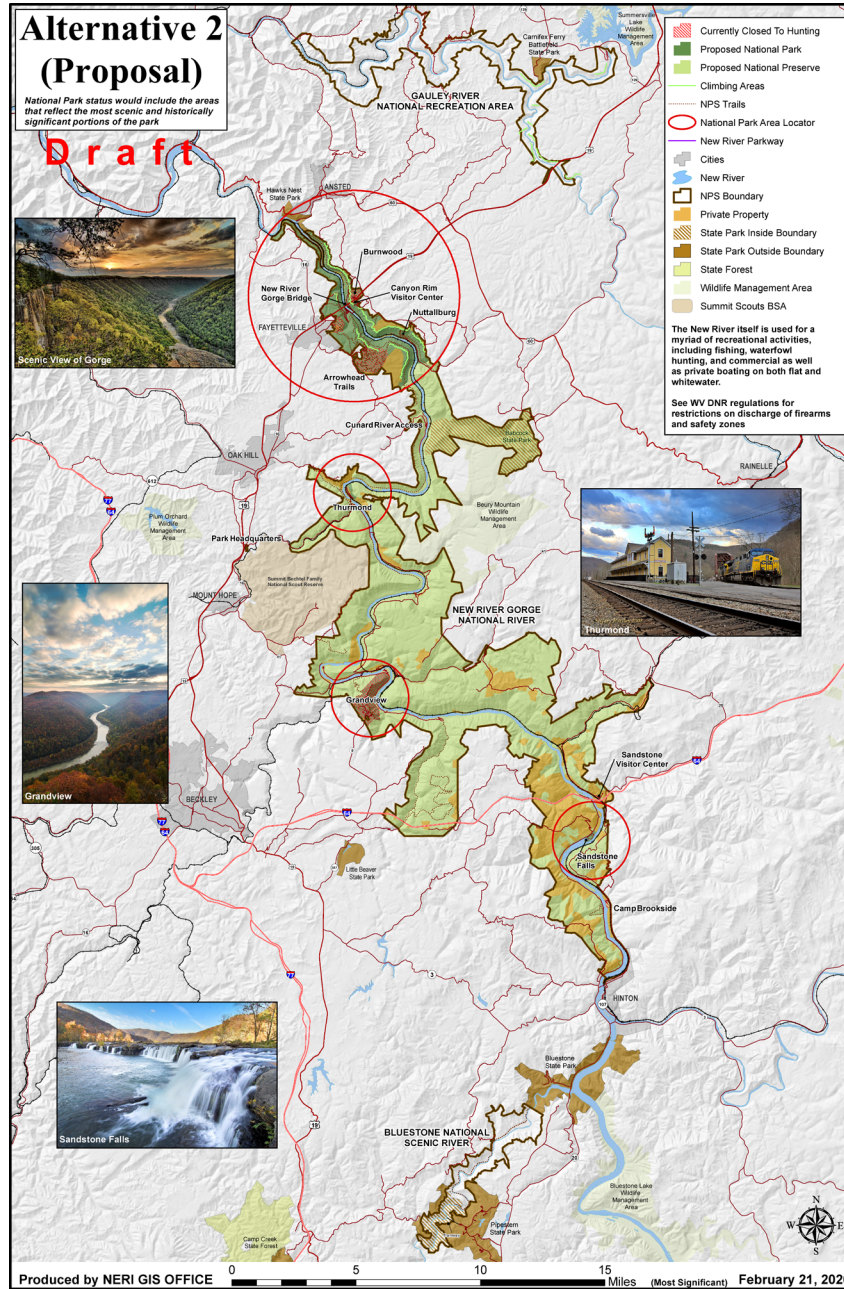
This goes to Ms. Lizzie Watts. Ms. Watts, it is critical that we all have the facts as we discuss the park and preserve designation. The bill designates approximately 7,691 acres as national park.

David, did you want to point it out?

Mr. BROOKS. Sure.

Senator MANCHIN. It designates 7,691 acres as national park with the rest as national preserve.

[David Brooks delineates projected map.]



Mr. BROOKS. So the preserve would all be included here and then the individual national park areas would be here, here—there and by the—

Senator MANCHIN. So everything that has the circle is basically going to be in the new national park area?

Mr. BROOKS. That's in the bill right now.

Senator MANCHIN. That is in the bill right now. And everything that is not in those circles is open to be used as we have always used them, right?

Mr. BROOKS. Right.

Senator MANCHIN. The hunting is permitted.

Mr. BROOKS. Yes, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. Ms. Watts, how many of those 7,691 acres are currently open to hunting? That is my first question. And the follow-up on that, do we know how much hunting activity occurs in these areas?

Ms. WATTS. Right now, right now, presently—

Senator MANCHIN. You need your mic. Hold it, just pull it out of there and hold it, if you will. Yes, go ahead.

Ms. WATTS. Can you all hear?

Senator MANCHIN. Yes.

Ms. WATTS. Presently, as we operate today, there's 7,000 acres that he was referring to, Senator Manchin was referring to, but of those acres, of everything that was hunted last year is the second answer and that's probably the easiest, but of all the 72,000 acres within the park minus there's about 1,381 acres that right now we do not allow hunting and then those areas are safety zones around really busy visitor areas such as Canyon Rim Visitor Center. But all the other areas are open to hunting. With the change it goes down to about 4,300 or so acres that would be closed to hunting.

But Senator Manchin, you asked me how much the take was?

Senator MANCHIN. How much activity is on that hunting and how much harvest has been?

Ms. WATTS. The harvest for the last year for tags—there were 52 deer taken out of that 68,000, 69,000 acres. There were 52 deer, there were 9 turkey and there was 1 bear.

Senator MANCHIN. My second question.

Hold on now, hold on.

[Someone speaking out from the audience.]

What is that?

Senator CAPITO. Stats from where?

Senator MANCHIN. Stats from where?

Ms. WATTS. Those stats came from the Division of Natural Resources.

Audience MEMBER #1. The only way you would report that, when you're tagging in your animal, is if you report your animal tagged online—where they would then ask if you went to check stations—

Senator MANCHIN. Okay.

Audience MEMBER #1. The DNR officer, they would not ask for that information, so there's no way—

Senator MANCHIN. Okay. We will follow up with it. Thank you.

Ms. WATTS. We'll follow up, because I love getting those statistics. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Here is the other thing. First question, on the question. This goes to Mr. Harman, okay?

I appreciate your testimony but you express concern about future regulation in hunting and trapping on private property as well as concerns that hunting closures may be put into place within 500 feet of buildings. We drafted the bill to try and clarify that hunting in the areas designated as national preserve will be managed in the same manner as currently allowed. One of the reasons I am glad that we are having the hearing is to discuss these issues on the record. I am also glad that we have the National Park Service represented as well. So perhaps we can clarify some of the potential impacts.

So the question would go—and that was Mr. Harman, the statement that you made.

So again, Lizzie, can you please address the concerns brought up by Mr. Harman and others about regulation to private property and hunting rights? In other words, does anything in the bill or the existing law allow the park to regulate these activities on private property?

Ms. WATTS. No, sir. The new bill will not change how it's operated today, and we do not regulate on state—on private property from—

Senator MANCHIN. Good, okay. Does the Park Service close areas within 500 feet of buildings to all hunting and would that change?

Ms. WATTS. Actually, the compendium does—there are two legislative options that are tied to that. One is what's in DNR, Division of Natural Resources, rules and regulations for hunting and fishing. They have closures for certain things. Then we have federal closures which are called the CFR, Code of Federal Regulations, and we adopt most of the state rules.

There is one difference that I am aware of and there are probably more, but there's one in particular that actually talks about how far you can be away from buildings. It is not in our compendium that says buildings. We actually say there are three places in particular—campgrounds, visitor centers and public access areas like boat launches—where we have a lot of the public at one time using an area and it is not—we adopted the 500 feet which was in the state rules.

Senator MANCHIN. Finally, my final question, then I will turn it over to Senator Capito, is again to Ms. Watts and it is basically the concern that the designation as a national park and preserve will alter the permits and fees required for the activities of people to enjoy the New River. I know the New River Gorge National River does not currently charge an entrance fee. But do you have the authority to charge user fees under the current law? The way things are right now, could you charge a fee? Could you design or designate a fee for that and, in other words, could the park start charging, if they chose to do so? And the follow-up to that is does the bill change any authorities when it comes to permitting commercial outfitting or charging user fees, as been stated?

Ms. WATTS. It changes nothing. It will be operated just as it has in the past. The bill has no reflection on that and there are no entrance fees at this point in time and commercial use fees are the only fees that we collect and that's for commercial businesses that

actually make money within the park and that's required by federal law.

Senator MANCHIN. Senator Capito.

Thank you.

Ms. WATTS. You're welcome.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Mr. Harman, the current law permits hunting in at least a portion of the National River area but, I mentioned this in my statement, the acreage is not specified in the existing law on the National River. Have you, in your conversations, ever, has anybody ever raised a concern with you of the present designation, that it is not specified, what areas in law, like we would be doing in this bill? Do you understand my question? I am probably not asking it as specifically. Have you ever heard a concern that it is not specifically laid out in the law how many acres you can presently hunt on and how many you cannot?

Mr. HARMAN. It's always a concern. And, of course, we want to maintain as much opportunity to hunt as we possibly can and I don't know if that is really answering your question, but—

Senator CAPITO. It does. It does, yes.

Let's talk about the Lower Gorge because I think that is a source of concern for many of the sportsmen. Are you familiar with the hunting concerns in the Lower Gorge and could you specify that a little bit for me?

Mr. HARMAN. There are truly some sportsmen in the room that are a lot more intimate that could answer those questions—

Senator CAPITO. Uh-huh.

Mr. HARMAN. —better than myself.

Senator CAPITO. But you have heard that, specifically?

Mr. HARMAN. Yes.

Senator CAPITO. Yes.

So, to the Superintendent on the Lower Gorge issue, the terrain in this issue, my understanding is, that it is pretty dramatic in terms of what it is like to maneuver and access and everything. Can you describe that a little bit and why that might be an area that, that is part of the area that is of the area of contention of the acres that have been removed from the hunting designation. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Ms. WATTS. Yes, ma'am.

Actually, the section of the Lower Gorge of the New is the most dramatic. It is from Nuttallburg, which is one of the most historic sites, and tells the history of Southern West Virginia, of coal mining, railroading and logging, but it also is the one that tells the story of how we're tied internationally and nationally to the industrial age of the state. It is the contributions of loggers, railroaders, hunters and everybody else that built this country.

So we start at Nuttallburg and we go through this very steep, narrow gorge. It's where the gorge changes. It's the section that most whitewater rafters say is the most adventuresome. It is technically the hardest, but it's very, very steep. It also has one of the other recreational uses that's tremendous—which is, you see the Endless Wall?—and many of the rock climbers that climb there, and the scenic views from that section are the most dramatic in the

park. You're on the rim and you're looking down 200 to 300 feet and you see this spectacular gorge.

So it's that section that is very, very steep and it's hard to access. It's either by boat or you hike most places. And so, that's really the difference between that section of the Gorge——

Senator CAPITO. Yes.

Mr. JOHNSON, do you have any comment on the Lower Gorge issue?

Mr. JOHNSON. Yes, ma'am. As the Superintendent said, you know, it's steeper than a cow's face. People, you know, if you go down——

Senator CAPITO. It is what?

Mr. JOHNSON. It's steeper than a cow's face. It's straight up and down. You know, it's something that most folks, unless they're in really good physical condition can hunt. I would call it, you need to be in sheep shape. In other words, you need to be able to get on a mountain to sheep hunt to use that property.

Senator CAPITO. Well, that is a descriptor there, thank you.

[Laughter.]

Well, I think this is going to be, and I would encourage and I'm sure you all will because I know this is an area of contention that we will get some comments on this and clarifications from those of you who have used that area and are very concerned about it. So I would ask that.

I do want to just reinforce what Senator Manchin said because Mr. Harman, it was in your statement on the trapping issue because we did cover this. We started out differently than we ended up, I think, in this bill. And you mentioned archery which, I will have to say, I am not sure we have actually considered archery like we need to——

Senator MANCHIN. We need to clarify that.

Senator CAPITO. ——so we need to clarify that as well. But there is now a preservation in the law that would preserve the ability to trap on the private lands is my understanding. So does that satisfy your concerns?

Mr. HARMAN. That's, that's, that's better.

[Laughter.]

No, we're not satisfied but it's better. There's a lot of fuzzy things in here for us as sportsmen. We've tried to clarify some things and some of my comments have been more as comments as now we can clarify them for the record.

Senator CAPITO. And that is why it is good——

Mr. HARMAN. That gives us all a good opportunity.

Senator CAPITO. And that is why we are——this is very important, I think.

Last question I am going to ask is to the Superintendent on the 7,600 acres that would be designated as the Park. My understanding is that includes some private property and public. Could you illuminate on that, please? Do you know specifically?

Ms. WATTS. Yes, ma'am.

The 76,000, I mean——

Senator CAPITO. 7,600.

Ms. WATTS. ——7,600 acres that we're referring to that would be closed is really any both private land, state land, county land and

federal land. There are areas in the northern section, in particular the gorge, the Lower Gorge section as it goes up, that is really private property. There's about 3,000 acres of that that is either private or state, not owned by federal ownership.

Audience MEMBER #2. [Inaudible.]

Senator CAPITO. Okay.

Audience MEMBER #2. [Inaudible.]

Ms. WATTS. I am sorry, pardon?

Audience MEMBER #2. The criteria used to determine where the circles are—is that the end of the private land and all that—?

Ms. WATTS. To be completely honest, the circles were really to make the maps easier to read and we found that has probably been more complicated with the circles because the circles are actually larger than what the real land—

Senator CAPITO. Than what the designation—

Ms. WATTS. —acquisition is or even within the boundary. We—the first set of maps, yeah, if you start at Nuttallburg and go up it will tell you where it is. It's not the whole circle. It's just, we thought, that was when we were doing the maps earlier, we thought that would be easier to recognize. We didn't realize that it would visually be so big because it's not. It's not as big as it looks.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, and thank you, Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Senator.

Let me explain to you now how we go into this next part of the program.

During a public hearing like this I think we have people that have signed up. Terri, do you have their names?

Ms. BERKLEY. Yes, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. You will call the names out for the people. Give me at least three or four names so they can line up, if you want to come up front, and we will do this in an orderly manner.

The panel here is not here to answer the questions. If we can get some of that in, we will. I don't want to take up your two minutes. Your statement goes into the record. The question you ask in your statement, we are going to get you answers. We are going to make sure that this thing is delved into and then work with you. That is the markup when we go to that, can we make the changes?

Jerod, as you said, there are still some fuzzy areas of this or that or you don't like it at all, but if you don't like it at all or you like certain parts of it, make that as clear as we possibly can so there's no interpretation left for anybody else.

With that, we are going to start. If you will, Terri, call the names of the people, the first four and we will start there.

Ms. BERKLEY. Making a statement for the record is Mr. Jack David Woodrum, followed by Mr. Jim Campbell, Mr. Cully McCurdy and Mr. Glenn Coleman.

Senator MANCHIN. If the four would work their way to the front in the order they were called, and we will take you as the witnesses come forward.

Yes, sir. Go ahead.

Mr. WOODRUM. Ranking Member Manchin, Senator Capito, distinguished guests.

Senator MANCHIN. Hold on, is the mic on?

Mr. WOODRUM. How about now?

Senator CAPITO. No.

Senator MANCHIN. Who is in charge of the mic?

Mr. WOODRUM. Alright, I have to get a little shorter. How's that?

Senator MANCHIN. Go ahead. When you all come up, please state your name for the record again when you start, before you start.

Mr. WOODRUM. Jack, J-a-c-k Woodrum, W-o-o-d-r-u-m.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. WOODRUM. Ranking Member Manchin, Senator Capito, distinguished guests, thank you for bringing this home to West Virginia. We appreciate you having this hearing here.

I'm President of the Summers County Commission. Summers County sits at the southern gateway to the New River Gorge National River. We have provided a resolution in support of this task you're undertaking here. We think, as far as the economy, will gather this to be a great improvement and a great help to us in advancing tourism here within the region.

Also a member of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority and we—

Senator MANCHIN. You need to speak up. You have to speak loud, sir.

Mr. WOODRUM. —and we also support your efforts and we appreciate your working on this.

As an elected official, I would say I'm one of the few elected officials that's spent a great deal of time within the New River Gorge, the Bluestone National Wild and Scenic River and the Gauley national areas, decades of my life. The people I grew up with helped mentor me and craft the legislation—to make the legislation for the New River Gorge Regional—or for the New River Gorge National Recreation Area. The enabling legislation, I would encourage you to do everything you can to maintain that enabling legislation which also includes trapping which, I understand, is becoming an issue, but I grew up running a trap line, hunting, fishing, canoeing, there's very little of this land that I haven't touched in my lifetime.

It don't look like it now, but at one time I was out and about. So—but we would appreciate everything you can do to move this project forward but also within the park with this additional visitorship, it's going to eat up a lot of resources so I would also encourage you to do everything you can to be respectful of their budget, to increase their budget to allow them to handle this increased visitorship which is going to be very important to us.

Summers County, we look at counties outside of the immediate area of the Gorge that have provided resolutions in support including at least one county in Virginia, upstream of Hinton. So, we—this one is going to mean a great deal to a lot of us. Also, the New River Parkway needs completing and that would be a big part of it.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. WOODRUM. We have an \$11 million investment, and this would help us with that too.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you very much.

Mr. WOODRUM. Thank you very much.

Senator MANCHIN. We appreciate your testimony.

Sir, you want to talk with your mouth almost right on it, if you can.

Mr. CAMPBELL. I'm your sound guy.

[Laughter.]

So my name's Jim Campbell. I own Chimney Corner and a historic house up in Ansted, the Page Vawter House that we restored and has a lot of great history with the railroads and so forth. I've also also been involved in tourism and trying to bring other events here. I'm originally from Los Angeles. I'm a transplant. Really, I recognized 13 years ago the opportunities here, especially for motorcycle riders on the 60 and showing our place.

So I, you know, revived Chimney Corner. We have a café and a country store down there. We brought, worked with the Boy Scouts to bring the Spartan Race sandwiches, been a huge boon in exposure to our area, Bridge Jam, working on a motorcycle rally right now for Memorial Day weekend. So there's a lot of opportunities here that we're, we've been missing. I think that this is a huge opportunity for us, for tourism and tourism is our jobs of the future.

There's just so much that we can really offer as an area and with the beauty that we have here. I know you've all been parts of it and stuff so, I appreciate your continued support in what we're doing on a little scale over here, the small business owners and that. I think this will bring everybody's value of our area, our properties, our businesses up, up to another level where we're able to compete with some of these other areas.

So that's all I have to say. Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir, very much. We appreciate your testimony.

Next?

Mr. MCCURDY. And for the short guy.

Senator MANCHIN. Get up close to it, so I know they will be able to hear you.

Mr. MCCURDY. Senator Capito, Senator Manchin, thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Cully McCurdy, and I'm the District Wildlife Biologist for the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) for West Virginia and Virginia and I reside in Pocahontas County, West Virginia. The NWTF is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the wild turkey and the preservation of our hunting heritage with 180,000 adult members nationwide and over 3,500 adult members in West Virginia.

The NWTF in West Virginia has spent nearly \$1.6 million since 1985 on habitat projects, outreach, land purchases and increasing sportsmen access to public lands. Since 1985, NWTF volunteers and partners raised and spent more than \$488 million toward our mission of conserving wildlife habitat, preserving our hunting heritage across the U.S.

In 2012 the NWTF embarked on the 10-year national "Save the Habitat, Save the Hunt" initiative. One of the goals was to open access, working with our federal and state partners, to 500,000 acres for hunters nationwide. Seven years into the initiative we have surpassed our half-million-acre goal by 125,000 acres. This was an important goal related to the nationwide R3 effort by state

wildlife agencies and conservation groups. R3 stands for Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation of hunters. It is a movement to address the declining number of hunters in our country by recruiting new hunters, retaining those that currently hunt and reactivating former hunters that have lapsed for various reasons.

Hunters pay for conservation through license sales and excise tax through the purchase of firearms, ammunition, archery equipment and accessories. Funds collected are allocated to state game agencies by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the guidelines of the Pittman-Robertson Act. Statistics show that one of the primary reason hunters leave the sport is due to the lack of areas to hunt and loss of access. If the redesignation occurs under the current, preferred alternative related to Senate bill 2555, 4,385 acres of public land access will be lost to hunters. This is unacceptable, and it's not supported by the users that have enjoyed this land in many cases for generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to——

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you very much, sir, we appreciate it. [Applause.]

Terri, do you want to call maybe three more as they come down?

Ms. BERKLEY. The next set of speakers is Ms. Brenda Howells, Mr. Joe Brouse, Ms. Lisa Strader and Mr. Ed McMinn.

Senator MANCHIN. If you all would move down as you can to the sides here, and then we will call you in accordingly.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. COLEMAN. I'm Glenn Coleman. Senator Joe and Senator Capito, I want to thank you for, I think we met.

Senator MANCHIN. Yes, we have, thank you.

Mr. COLEMAN. But I am pretty much in agreement with Mr. Harman. He's addressed everything that I wanted to address here today to let you know about what the hunters are going to lose here if, and I don't hunt some of these areas but I do hunt other areas that in the stipulation that these areas, a lot of these areas may be rock cliff and may be inaccessible to hunt, but a lot of them are accessible to hunt and also there are a lot of deer, turkey and bear harvested off of these areas.

And so, and the assumption that we're heartless, we just want our rights, that we don't care about the other things, is totally wrong and so, that's also been brought up here today. And I don't agree with that and none of the guys that hunt and stuff in here do agree. We have lost a lot of areas to hunt and in areas that we used to hunt constantly and we don't have that area anymore because of areas that have been taken over by say, one primary area that I hunt that affects me is the Boy Scout area and those areas they have ever since they have came in and I know it was private land that they purchased and I don't begrudge them that, but they have tried to deny us access to the Park Service land ever since they've been back there.

And so, it's a situation——

Senator MANCHIN. That has been brought to our attention today, and we are going to work on that.

Mr. COLEMAN. Okay.

Senator MANCHIN. I am glad you all brought it to our attention.

Mr. COLEMAN. It is something that needs to be taken care of.

The other thing, the last thing, my red light's on so I want to thank you and Senator Capito for your work on our healthcare and our teachers. Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. You are welcome. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Who is next, Terri?

Ms. BERKLEY. There's two right there, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. Call their name, please.

Ms. HOWELLS. Hi, my name is Brenda Howells.

Senator MANCHIN. Brenda, if you will, just pull it right close to you, yes, pull it down, pull it down just a little bit. There you go.

Ms. HOWELLS. Got it.

Hi, my name is Brenda Howells. I work at ACE Adventure Resort in Oak Hill. We have been watching our rafting numbers decline over the past ten years. We are constantly looking for new ideas to bring people to the area. In the past five years we have opened our private waterpark to the public. We have started Mountain Music Fest which we hold annually, and this will be our seventh year in June of holding this festival. We are at the present time installing an aerial park to attract more visitors.

I feel designating the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve is a great economic move for Southern West Virginia. From tourism to retail, restaurants and hotels, our area desperately needs jobs to keep our young people from leaving the state. It would also be an opportunity to attract new businesses to the area and bring more jobs.

Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you so much.

[Applause.]

Next? Okay.

Mr. MCMINN. Hello, my name is Ed McMinn. It's M-c-M-i-n-n. I'm here representing the West Virginia Bowhunters Association. I appreciate the opportunity to speak, Senator Capito and Senator Manchin.

We are also one of the affiliated clubs of the West Virginia Wildlife League. We also represent 15 affiliated archery clubs within our state and over 3,000 members of the Bowhunters Association, many of which live in Fayette, Nicholas, Clay, Raleigh and surrounding counties of these areas. We believe the intentions of this bill are good and meant to benefit West Virginia, but we are opposed to the loss of over 4,000 acres of public hunting land.

Honestly, it feels a little bit like David versus Goliath here, standing before two powerful Senators, but that power is given to you by your constituents, John Q. Public. The numbers that Ms. Watts gave on statistics, those are harvest numbers. That does not indicate activity. I spent over 100 hours in a tree stand this year. I harvested one deer. So, many trips up and down the interstate, up and down 79, not to this area specifically, but areas in Clay County. And so, there can be a lot of additional activity from sportsmen that aren't recorded in those harvest numbers.

So, you know, as a sportsman, we're not in favor of giving land to, no offense, to the National Park Service. We would like this land to be managed by locals. We're also facing a senator on the state side that wants to open up wildlife management in state forests to offer it to vehicles and ATV use. So I know it's not the place for questions, but it's kind of like, when will this stop?

We want to protect our land. We want to use it. So, I know I'm starting to run short on time. I would implore you to not let this be your legacy to give away West Virginia land. Let's keep it. Let's market it for ourselves and for others outside to come, but let's work on those boundaries to make them smaller so we have less loss.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you so much.

[Applause.]

Ms. BERKLEY. The next speaker is Mr. Joe Brouse.

Senator MANCHIN. I do understand harvesting. They don't call it hunting for nothing and they don't call fishing "catching" and so, we understand very much the time put in.

Yes, sir.

Mr. BROUSE. Joe Brouse, J-o-e B-r-o-u—

Senator MANCHIN. Put that, Joe, put that just a little bit, twist it up.

Mr. BROUSE. B-r-o-u-s-e.

Senator MANCHIN. There you go.

Mr. BROUSE. Okay. I just wanted to say, working on the economic development side—

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

Mr. BROUSE. —one of the most, one of our most available opportunities is keeping the businesses that we have and allowing them to expand with capital investment. Folks like Mr. Johnson and many of the folks in the outdoor economy footprint want to employ more people. In many ways, they're underemploying and with these visitors coming to the area and the economic impact that that will allow, that will happen.

But the other thing is that so many of their customers are folks that respect the flora, the fauna and they're coming here for the right reasons to respect, to respect the recreation and the outdoors. So, Senators, I want to commend you, both of you, for trying to strike the right balance between our heritage and between our economic future. It's not the panacea for what ails us in a post-, post,—in the transition economy, but it is a big step forward. So thank you very much.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

As our next witness comes forward, do you want to call the next group?

Ms. BERKLEY. Our next set of speakers will be Mr. Thomas Campbell, Ms. Heather Johnson, Mr. Roger Wilson, Mr. Larry Berry.

Senator MANCHIN. If you all would just work your way down to the front, and we will continue. Thank you so much for being here.

Ms. STRADER. Okay, how close do I need to be? Can you hear me?

Senator MANCHIN. Yes, loud and clear.

Ms. STRADER. Okay. My name is Lisa Strader, S-t-r-a-d-e-r. I'm the Director at Visit Southern West Virginia. We're a nine-county tourism bureau here and four of our counties are fortunate to have the New River Gorge National River run through their boundaries, but I will say that the National Parks entities that we have in our area affect all of our nine counties.

As Commissioner Ruby mentioned, you know, tourism is growing in our area and it's also in our state but it's also growing in our region—\$712 million in direct visitor spending in 2018, and we support in tourism almost 7,600 jobs. This can, with the—obviously we support this resolution. We did, our organization also sent our support in as well. We feel like this would also, long-term, increase our visitorship, our jobs and this is an area that we feel like we have a lot of growth in, especially in Southern West Virginia. Thank you for your time.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, thank you so much.

Alright, next witness?

[Applause.]

Mr. CAMPBELL. Hello.

Senator CAPITO. Hi.

Mr. CAMPBELL. My name's Thomas Campbell, C-a-m-p-b-e-l-l.

I've lived in the area for over 7 years and first came to the area over 20 years ago. Presently, I am a small business owner and a part-time raft guide. I have enjoyed the whitewater and outdoor recreation of this state for over three decades and worked commercially as a raft guide, fishing guide, mountain biking guide, outdoor recreation leader for almost 20 years in six states and three countries. I have seen how lands and waterways are managed in different areas, and I am opposed to the New River Gorge becoming a national park.

The New River Gorge is a beautiful area and well managed by the National Park Service and the multiple outdoor enthusiasts, whether they be private or commercial users. Why I am opposed—the possibility of user fees and/or permits, even if the permits were to be free. People like myself are not looking for access restricted for what isn't currently allowed for things like campfires, hunting, fishing, hiking, boating and pets.

While increased tourism would almost certainly benefit my business, I, along with others, am concerned with what the possible numbers might bring, though I am not opposed to increased tourism, again, things like user fees and increased restrictions. For instance, certain trails are quite crowded at times and I know that parking lots have had to tow vehicles with overflow. Currently, the National Park Service manages the Gorge and does a great job. They are competent and helpful. Likewise, private and commercial boaters, other sportsmen do a fine job of policing themselves and keeping the Gorge beautiful.

We have done this for decades and trust you will allow us to continue to do so.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Thank you all very much.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. We want to thank everybody also for being attentive to the time and if they go over a few seconds we are basically watching from the people that came before, the woman that spoke in favor and him speaking in opposition, we gave a little bit of her time to him to make it work out, a balanced approach.

Ms. JOHNSON. I'm Heather Johnson, owner of River Expeditions. I support the new designation as a park and preserve as do most local businesses and tourism-related entities. This is a logical next step in raising the profile of the New River Gorge in West Virginia as a destination. Quite simply, it's a no brainer.

It's disheartening that some opponents of the new designation have been propagating fear and misinformation. For far too long our area has lagged behind as a result of the "we don't want that here" mentality. I only hope these few dissenters will not disrupt the entire process for those of us who stand ready to embrace more visitors to the park and our area. And while we contemplate this issue today on the local level, the ramifications of our actions will affect our entire country for years to come.

I do not take this issue lightly. For me and 150 of my employees, this is our livelihood, not merely a hobby. I'm encouraged by the bipartisan support of our Senators and hope this new designation comes to pass. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

As our next witness comes up, Terri, do you want to call the next four that you want to come forward?

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Luke Gilliam, Mr. Matt Wender, Ms. Becky Sullivan and Mr. Bill Lehrter.

Senator MANCHIN. If you all would work your way down to the front, we would appreciate it.

Thank you, sir, very much for being here.

Mr. WILSON. The name's Roger Wilson.

Senator MANCHIN. Roger Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. I'm a small business owner in Fayette County, also a lifetime——

Senator MANCHIN. You can pull that up, the whole thing, there you go.

Mr. WILSON. Also, a lifetime resident of West Virginia, lifelong hunter, fisherman, hiker and mushroom hunter and all the good stuff. I support this change. I'm sure there are going to be some changes to the land, as we talk, but I do support it. The hardest thing that I've ever hunted in West Virginia is keeping a good job for a long time. I support anything that we can help our communities, the little towns of Sandstone or Meadow Creek, the places a lot of people don't think about. If we can do this, then we can bring opportunities for people to create other small businesses. I can't argue against that.

Thank you so much.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir, very much.

[Applause.]

Mr. BERRY. My name is Larry Berry, and I thank you for being allowed to be here today. This is my first meeting, and I wish I had attended others.

Senator MANCHIN. Larry, get just a little bit closer if you will.

Mr. BERRY. Okay.

Senator MANCHIN. There you go.

Mr. BERRY. Can you hear me now?

Senator MANCHIN. That is better.

[Laughter.]

Mr. BERRY. I thank you for being here. I'm a wildlife biologist, and I'm old. I originally made comments on the New River Gorge National River and one of our main concerns was the continuation of hunters for the sportsmen of West Virginia and it was a great concern at that time and it still is a great concern. This is almost 40 years in the change. And actually, I've dreaded this day for fear of that, and I'm sure our Representatives are going to help protect that portion of our heritage that we enjoy.

I'm not aware of any conflicts between hunters and tourists on the Gorge area. Somebody else may have information there, but I'm not aware of any. I would be against any restriction of hunting. Hunting is a wildlife management tool and that tool should be used. It's the cheapest tool you'll ever find and hunters do that work. You don't have to do anything.

I don't say anything about the park, I just say about hunting and its use and that's my main concern. I know in Alaska, Alaskans, Native Alaskans can hunt parks and I consider myself a Native West Virginian, even though I'm not the right color and don't fit the definition, my great-great-great-grandfather lived in Greenbrier County and helped settle those areas there. And I just wish that would continue. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Sir, before you get started. We have four or five seats empty if there are any ladies in the back that would like to come forward or anybody that is having a hard time standing. If you can raise your hand if you have a seat beside you. A few seats have opened up. I see two, three there. I have three here and you have one. Okay, we have seven seats in here. So if you want to come forward.

Also, if I can ask you all, as we wrap up the ones who have already pre-signed up, if there is anyone in the audience that would like to speak that hasn't, raise your hand and we will have someone come around, get your name and then put you on the list, if you don't mind, if you want to do that. I want to make sure we can accommodate everybody possible.

Yes, Ali, if you all, when they raise their hand, go around and take a list, and we will get them to sign. Okay?

So, with that being said, anymore? We have more seats, three more seats back here. They will pass them up. You keep your hands up and they will come to you. Well, you don't have to keep them up that long, but keep them up. They will come find you.

Sir, I am sorry, you go ahead, please.

Mr. GILLIAM. My name is Luke Gilliam, G-i-l-l-i-a-m.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Luke.

Mr. GILLIAM. I'm a resident of Fayette County. I live outside of Fayetteville, am an avid hunter and fisherman, and my concern is the portion of this property that's going to be no hunting allowed. As the biologist said, that is what helps control our game popu-

lation and stuff. If you have, like we have a lot of issues now with coyotes and if people aren't allowed to hunt and trap and even in that areas——

Senator MANCHIN. Yes.

Mr. GILLIAM. ——they're going to get that much more populated. Coons, racoons, and stuff, then you start getting more rabies, effects of that and when it starts coming into people's homes then they want somebody to do something about it. Well, they've stopped all the hunting and that's the best management for these animals and stuff. And my concern with down there, they say the property is steeper than a cow's face, well, why would you stop them hunting if you can't use it for anything else because it's too steep? What are they going to use it for?

[Applause.]

If it's unusable and inaccessible, why stop people from hunting? If it can't be used for anything else because, apparently, it's too steep. I mean, I hunt and fish down there. I have a cabin on Hawks Nest above the dam, and I was wondering if that is going to be taken away from me.

Senator MANCHIN. I don't think. I mean, the things you are stating right now, we will get answers for you as your statement is being made.

Mr. GILLIAM. Okay, you know, because there's several cabins on that river down there that people access by boat and camp and stay in and stuff.

Senator MANCHIN. Let me just, I don't want to take away from your time here, but let me just say this. Any of you all when you are making your statement, if there is a question that you are asking for clarification, you make that as your statement and we will make sure that is in the record and get back to you with an answer on that.

Go ahead. I am sorry.

Mr. GILLIAM. Okay.

Senator MANCHIN. Twenty seconds left.

Mr. GILLIAM. Okay. I just think if they—I don't know why that has to be——

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

Mr. GILLIAM. ——that portion has to be taken away from hunting. It can still be upgraded, but why it has to be taken away from the hunters when it's, as they say, it's too steep to do anything with anyway.

Senator MANCHIN. Right.

Mr. GILLIAM. So if nobody can access it, let the hunters hunt. That's what I say. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. We will find out. Thank you, sir, very much.

[Applause.]

Just pull the whole thing. It will come down. Just push down hard. There you go.

Ms. SULLIVAN. Can you hear me?

Senator MANCHIN. Yes.

Senator CAPITO. Yes.

Ms. SULLIVAN. Hi, I'm Becky Sullivan, B-e-c-k-y S-u——

Senator MANCHIN. Get closer, Becky.

Ms. SULLIVAN. ——l-l-i-v-a-n.

I am, I grew up in Fayetteville. I live in Oak Hill now. I'm currently the Director of the New River Gorge CVB and the President of the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce. As a representative of these two organizations, we do support the designation of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. The reason being, Chelsea Ruby stated, the momentum is growing. Let's keep that momentum going. The numbers have proven the tourism boost and the economic development, and that's why we stand behind it.

Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Sir, before you start—do you want to call, do you have another four you want to call, Terri, so they can work their way down?

Ali, did you get—there are some gentlemen back in the back that had their hands raised on this side. Did you get them?

ALI [from Senator Manchin's staff]. I did. I got four. If there is anybody additional—

Senator MANCHIN. Anybody else that wants to talk after we get done with the—just raise your hand and we will get to you.

Okay, Terri, the next four?

Ms. BERKLEY. Yes, our next speakers are Jenna Grayson, Jeffrey Proctor, Thomas Gerencer and Logan Bockrath.

Senator MANCHIN. Okay, please work your way to the sides, and you continue, sir. I am sorry, start.

Mr. LEHRTER. Okay, so my name is Bill Lehrter, L-e-h-r-t-e-r. I'm a raft guide, a fishing guide, a hunting guide and a member of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. With the National Park Service facing severe budget shortfalls, it seems extremely likely that the designation change will bring user fees to the local outdoor community. The NPS faces a \$12 billion maintenance backlog, and the most recent budget included a \$580 million cut to their funding.

In response to these funding problems, the NPS recently raised entrance fees by \$5 to \$10 in many of its most popular parks. White Sands, the subject of a recent economic study used to support this change, raised its entry fee by \$25 after becoming a national park. Kayaking in the Everglades is \$35 a day. Many of us in this room pay \$25 a year to enter the Grand Canyon lottery. Now it's been stated that no fees would occur, but I think that the increased attendance that we expect would change that and that the NPS would see private boating as a revenue source.

So, in all, 117 National Park Service sites charge entry fees and I've been to a lot of those and happily paid them, but I believe that this place is different. Now, I moved here and bought a home in Fayette County because of its incredibly unique public land opportunities and the vibrant outdoor community that has grown here. Ours is a culture of after work climbing and biking trips and a culture of people who guide a commercial rafting trip and then go back out for another run afterwards with their friends. Our household eats wild game that I harvest within this national park.

Now we don't make a lot of money as guides, but we're rich in resources and recreational opportunities and we need to ask ourselves if we're willing to trade Fayetteville for Gatlinburg or if the local companies changing marketing materials for national river to national park is worth forever changing this place we love. The Na-

tional Park Service was created to protect unique landscapes, not as an economic development tool.

Thanks.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you very much. Well said.

[Applause.]

Mr. WENDER. Senator Capito, Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Matt, good seeing you.

Mr. WENDER. Thanks for joining us.

My name is Matt Wender, W-e-n-d-e-r. Formerly, I was a County Commissioner in Fayette County for 18 years. In Fayette County we're certainly grateful for the good tourism industry that we have. But make no doubt about it, coal is the backbone of Southern West Virginia, certainly the backbone of Fayette County as well. 2012 was the best year that we had for coal production in Fayette County. From 2012 to 2015, the industry declined. Since 2015, it's been in a virtual free fall, perhaps today we're doing a third as much coal business as we used to.

All of which begs the fact that we must continue to try to diversify our economic base, but at the same time let's not ignore the one part of our economy that is doing very well, the tourism industry. Let's do all we can to further enhance that and give that industry the best potential it has for future growth which is so critical to Fayette County and all of Southern West Virginia.

I certainly urge you to make the New River Gorge a National Park and Preserve.

Thank you very much.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Matt.

[Applause.]

Ms. GRAYSON. Hello. Hi, my name is—

Senator MANCHIN. Pull it down a little bit. There you go.

Ms. GRAYSON. My name is Jenna Grayson. I am a transplant to West Virginia. I'm also a member of the Generation New River Gorge Board, and as a Board Member I personally will state that I am in favor of the park. Like this gentleman said before me, tourism is so huge for this area and we believe that it would increase jobs and increase people's opportunities in this area.

When I moved to West Virginia I moved to the area because of the river but recently found out how very difficult it is to find a job here. I took a service-based position with WVU but that was pretty much all I could find. I think this would be a fabulous opportunity to give this area a boost in the economy and also bring young people into the area to stay, like myself.

So, thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you so much, thank you.

[Applause.]

Do we have—hold on—Terri, do we have more you want to call forward?

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Larry Case, Kevin Terrell, Dave Arnold and Chris Gill.

Senator MANCHIN. If everybody will work their way to the sides at the front.

Please start.

Mr. PROCTOR. My name is Jeff Proctor. P-r-o-c-t-o-r. Senator Manchin and Senator Capito, thank you, and Superintendent Watts, thank you.

I would like to say that I totally support the suggested change that's on the table right now. I think it would help the economy and I think that the area, as everyone has already pointed out, is struggling and we really, really need the jobs that are in the area. I also would like to give my support to what an amazing job the Park Service has done over these 40 years, and I hope that we can continue to get them financial support to continue to go take this to the next step.

This is, kind of, will shock Rick, but I would like to also say, everything in his speech, I totally agree with.

[Laughter.]

There's no need for me to pound the drum because I only have 20 seconds left, but thank you very much.

Senator MANCHIN. Thanks, Jeff.

[Applause.]

Mr. GERENCER. Hi, I'm Tom Gerencer. I'm a resident of Fayetteville. Despite the orange, I am not a hunter. I'm a journalist, so I'm about as far from a hunter as you can get. In fact, I was shot at on a trail a mile from Fayetteville, a guy took a sound shot at me from about 50 feet away through a rhododendron thicket.

I would actually like to see hunting limited near our heavily used trails, but surprisingly I carpooled here today with two hunters who feel strongly the same way that I do. They don't feel that this is their land, and they think hunting should be limited near busy areas. We looked at the map together and it is great that you have worked so hard to allow hunting in most of the planned preserve. So hats off to you.

But those hunters, and lots of hunters in this area, hunt on remote lands near the river where nobody hikes that would be banned from hunting under this plan. You said today that these areas are too remote to hunt, but that's untrue. This hunter I know spent six hours dragging a deer out of the woods there this year. He uses that land daily. In the most obese state in the country, I feel we should encourage that.

I've heard there's lots of other places they can hunt. That's untrue. When you get out of work and you've got an hour of daylight, you hunt nearby or you don't hunt at all. This is everyone's land, including people like me who don't hunt, but it's the hunter's land too. You're talking about changing their way of life. Hunting is already declining from an article I wrote for the Boston Globe about Lyme disease. Hunting bans in Massachusetts have caused massive increases in overpopulation of deer and a 6,000 percent increase in Lyme disease in 30 years.

Nobody could argue that we don't need an economic boost. That's already happening with most user groups in the park increasing and tourism increasing. A national park would help but for our health, our neighbors and our self-respect and as much as I am not a hunter, we owe it to ourselves to respect and preserve the tradition of hunting in these areas as much as possible. It's recreation and a way to feed their families.

Thank you for the work you're doing, and I know from listening to you all that you'll do the right thing.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Mr. BOCKRATH. I'm just going to take it down instead of trying to raise the mic.

Senator MANCHIN. Yes.

Mr. BOCKRATH. I want to use a couple minutes of my time to clarify some—

Senator MANCHIN. Give your name.

Mr. BOCKRATH. Oh, sorry. My name's Logan Bockrath. A couple minutes of time to clarify the panel here. First off, Lizzie Watts, Superintendent Watts, said the park boundary on the Lower Gorge area was at Nuttallburg. This will be the second time I've corrected her. It's off by two miles on the river left and one mile on the river right. So she's off there.

Second, with the question on archery in the firearms buffer zones. That is not a federal law. What we got was a map from the National Park Service that was given to the Senator's office that showed thousands of acres of private land closed to hunting as well as anywhere within the buffer zone, closed to hunting which is not according to state law and DNR which states you can bow hunt there.

Second and most surprisingly, I seem to be the only person here who has compared the numbers of the New River Gorge visitor numbers in the park versus the commercial river users. There's no correlation that will save rafting by increasing the park visitors. In fact, between 1990 and the 2010s, park visitation increased by 12 percent, yet, the rafting industry was down by 52 percent.

If we're using this to save the rafting industry in the process throwing hunters under the table, it's not worth it and not guaranteed.

Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

[Applause.]

All the things that you stated, were correcting, we will double check and basically get back to you to confirm or if we have adjustments to be made. Okay?

Mr. BOCKRATH. It's correct.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Mr. BOCKRATH. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Who do we have next? Okay.

Mr. TERRELL. Hi, my name is Kevin Terrell. That's T-e-r-r-e-l-l. I'm a resident of Fayetteville, as I have been for about the last 11 years, but have worked in the outdoor industry for about 20 years both in this country and in others.

While I do agree that the change of the name of the park would help, I worked in Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area when they changed the name to national park. That boosted visitorship and that's a great thing, bringing more people to this area. I do also agree that we need to more carefully consider the usage of the

land, like Tom Gerencer was saying, some of this land isn't used for anything except for some guys that take rafts down the river, park up on the side, do some hunting and then bring those deer down to the rafts. But I do agree that hunting should be restricted in some of the high-use areas like right around the Long Point Trail and some other areas near my home.

So I hope you consider everyone's input, and I know you'll make a good decision for us. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Mr. CASE. Hear me?

Senator MANCHIN. Yes.

Mr. CASE. My name is Larry Case. I'm pretty nervous. I don't want to say something really fast. It's Case, C-a-s-e, like the knife, okay?

This is hard to do. There's a bunch of people in this audience and in this little community. Fayetteville is a small community, and I got a lot of friends here that are on the opposite end of this spectrum, okay? And Rick's one of them and he's my friend and Dave Arnold and Jeff and everybody behind me, they're not going to have the same opinion as me. I'm telling you, it's a hard thing to do.

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

Mr. CASE. But as a hunter I feel like this has to be said, okay? Rick, you're almost ashamed of hunters for wanting this area, okay? I want to make the point, I would be ashamed as a hunter if we did not come out and speak out about this, okay?

[Applause.]

We cannot, and I know you think it's terrible if you're for this bill, stand and say it's okay if you want to take 4,385 acres from us which, truthfully, most, some of us think that it's more than that, okay? You seem to might want to make the point about harvest records. I retired as a DNR law enforcement captain. I was in the DNR 36 years. I know a little bit about it, okay? The numbers you want to quote about harvested game are just the ones that were checked in. Believe it or not, sometimes things don't get checked in. I know it's hard to believe, okay?

Secondly, I don't know about you all—

[Applause.]

I don't kill something every time I go. I don't. So you can't base it on two bear, nine turkeys and you know, whatever, okay? Sportsmen, hunters, in this area, we were promised this would stay open to hunting in 1978, as you all well know, when this area was formed, okay? That was a major sticking point when the first park, the National River was formed, okay? And we'd like to see it stay that way and thank you for the chance to speak.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Dave hold up one second, Dave, if you would. Do we have other people you want to call forward?

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Kenny Parker, Mr. Rob Rappold, Mr. Roy Smith and Mr. Michael Chennault.

Senator MANCHIN. If you all want to work your way down to the sides of the front, and then we will have Dave and then we will just come in order, okay?

Dave, are you ready?

Mr. ARNOLD. Barry, are you in this room? That changes what I'm going to say.

My name is Dave Arnold, D-a-v-e A-r-n-o-l-d. The reason I was asking for Barry was I thought he was going to make this comment but—in this role, I'm talking as a Board Member of the West Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association. The West Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association is a statewide organization on travel. I was President of the Tourism Business Sector of that for a long time. I was Chairman for 12 years, and I'm now a board member.

I'll read you, real quick, this has been submitted as testimony, but I'll read you the first paragraph.

The first sentence says, "West Virginia Hospitality is in favor of the bill to designate the New River Gorge in West Virginia as the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. Tourism is growing in West Virginia and this will be another tool in the tool box to help us continue growing. Tourism can help diversify our economy and transfer this region in the near future. We need to take advantage of the momentum of the tourism industry in seeing this."

With that said, I'll take my hat off and put my own personal comments in. First off, tourism is not the answer. Tourism is just a piece of the pie. You know, it's part of what we need to do to diversify this economy. There are layers upon layers upon layers. Hunting is one of the layers. I'm a crazed hunter. I hunt 60, 70 days a year. Coal is part of it. There's many, many things that are part of this.

The second thing I want to say is that I have had a great relationship with the National Park Service staff. There's been some bashing of staff, and I think they're phenomenal. There's no one I would rather see come around the corner if we have pinned boats, or something worse, than the National Park Rangers.

I also want to say that many of us are suffering the exact same thing. Hunting is in a huge decline. Anybody that's out there on opening day knows that ten years ago you heard twice as many shots as you do in rifle season as you do today. We need to help hunting. We need to help rafting. Rafting is in decline. And quite frankly, the population of West Virginia is in decline.

So, I see my red light. I'll just leave it with this. There is no such thing as standing still. You're either falling backwards or you're moving forward, and hopefully we move forward and hopefully we compromise and work this out. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Mr. PARKER. Hi, my name is Kenny Parker, P-a-r-k-e-r. I'm one of the owners of Water Stone Outdoors in Fayetteville and I'm also the Vice President of the New River Alliance of Climbers, our local climber, non-profit group.

These are my concerns. First of all, I think this bill should include language and funding for infrastructure for clean water to help make this, if you're going to call it a national park, make it more like a national park that we would have been accustomed to with, you know, clean rivers and streams.

Number two, having been involved with the development of climbing in the area from the beginning, I see the issues we already have with access and parking and I would like to see lan-

guage and funding in the bill which would help facilitate acquisition and improve access and parking to the existing areas which already see lots of use.

And third, I think any language in this bill which creates the perception of winners and losers amongst the existing user groups, who all have gotten along fine for years, and as a hunter myself, I don't want to see increase in the divisiveness amongst the local community as far as these user groups. I don't want there to be the perception that, you know, the whitewater or the climbers got benefits while the hunters lost because we all get along fine and I think it's important that we work toward a cohesive relationship between the various user groups.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Mr. RAPPOLD. Good morning. I'm Rob Rappold, Mayor of Beckley and current Chairman of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority. I'd like to begin by thanking our Senators for their attention, not only to this very important issue and project but for everything you do for Southern West Virginia and Beckley, particularly. So thank you very much.

I'm only here to say that the Beckley Common Council, our seven-member council, voted unanimously to, on the resolution in support of this designation. We do that primarily because we're on the New River highland. We're six miles if you drive down Batoff Mountain from New River. So we're very close by and the historical data that has been provided that indicates that this designation gives such a nice boost to visitors and tourism.

So with that, you have the full support of myself and the Common Council, the City of Beckley and the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority. Thank you for your efforts.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mayor.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Sir, one second, if you will.

Do you want to go ahead, Terri? Four more?

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Joe Aucremanne, Mr. Michael Chennault, Mr. Chris Gill.

Mr. GILL. I'm Chris Gill. I've decided not to speak. A lot of the things that I was going to address—

Senator MANCHIN. No problem. Then you need two more names.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. John Skaggs, Mr. Roy Blankenship.

Senator MANCHIN. If you all wish to speak just work your way down to the front, the side of the front.

Yes, sir, go ahead, I am sorry.

Mr. SMITH. Ah, yes. Hello, my name is Roy Smith.

Senator MANCHIN. Closer, Roy.

Mr. SMITH. My name is Roy Smith. I worked for the Park Service seasonal for six years back in like 2006 to 2010, and I love our area. I love the National River the way it is and it seems like hunting brings about 350,000 people to the area and it brings \$270 million to the state economy. And it seems like what these seasonal jobs and such, even for the rafting and stuff, it just seems like, you know, it's good for the area and stuff but it's just, kind of, seasonal, you know, the rafting industry is seasonal.

It just seems like we need the protection for hunters and stuff in the area because it's all year long and stuff for hunting. And it just seems like I'm, kind of, worried about personal property taxes for the area and stuff if it becomes a national park and stuff, just the taxes and stuff, I think they'll, kind of, go up steeper and suffer the area and stuff and I'm kind of worried about personal property taxes.

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

Mr. SMITH. And I'm worried about, even like fracking and natural gas and stuff in the national park and stuff. Those are kind of things I'm kind of concerned about, you know, around the river and stuff.

Senator MANCHIN. That is not allowed.

Mr. SMITH. You know, I just afraid, natural gas and stuff is going to, kind of, you know, the money and everything and stuff, you know, West Virginia wants money from natural gas and fracking and I'm just concerned about those issues in the national park. Thank you so much.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Mr. CHENNAULT. Hello.

Senator CAPITO. Hi.

Mr. CHENNAULT. My name's Michael Chennault, in French, la Français, it's called "Shen-oh". I come to speak for the little guys that can't speak for theirself, but also for the hunters back here. If you can see, I do hunt. I eat what I hunt. I skin it. I do tanning hides and everything like that I take care of it.

But my main concern is today is along the railroad tracks, the highways and the power lines, the power lines—used to go kill some nice bucks on the power lines because there's a lot of feed in the honeysuckle and the people at the Forestry Service ought of paid attention to this along the New River Gorge. They come and spray poison in 20-foot streams on both sides of the tracks. In the road they probably spray poison everywhere on the roads and both sides of the tracks and the power lines, they spray like crazy. And this gets into our water too, also, our drinking water.

But it kills all the vegetation and the bees are out there, in there and they're eating honey and stuff and I think, in fact, it wipes out the bees. There used to be bees in Chimney Corner in the rock cliff down there. Original honey in the rock, you might say. And I really am concerned with all I've seen the bee population decline. I know a lot of people don't like bees. They get stung by them. They think they're vicious little things sometimes, but they're very necessary for the circle of life.

I also represent the Algonquin People and our Chief Stanley—of the Eastern Coast and they come back, slip back and they hunt in the Gorge in their ancestral hunting grounds, but you won't know it. But we like to hunt quietly. Even a lot of these hunters here, they don't see them coming. I walked up and had game would go about me. I'd be laying camouflage. I don't like to wear red sometimes. I know it's illegal, but that makes it more of a target sometimes. It's for the game warden to fine, I guess, but that's okay with me.

But I hunt the way I like to hunt. I like stealth, but I also love what I hunt. I eat it til the last bone, the last gnarliest bone and I process its hide and I use every bit of the animal. I don't waste it. Now, I've heard a lot of sportsmen hunt for coon and stuff and what they do is they shoot 'em and leave 'em lay or throw 'em away. They discard the animal. They butcher deer and waste 'em like you wouldn't believe. But I don't like this park thing because—down yonder by the Gauley River I know every rock in that place, the ridges and everything in there, all the persimmon groves there and everything's being wiped out, different things in there.

I don't know if the Forestry Service looks down in those places—that goes through to see what's in their territory. If you own it, look at it and look at everything in the territory, but my people were French trappers before this place became a United States and I want to see hunting preserved. I'm in mourning with a black hat for every foot of hunting ground lost. It should not be.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. CHENNAULT. Have a good day.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Just pull that down there. There you go.

Mr. AUCREMANNE. My name is Joe Aucremanne. That's spelled, A-u-c-r-e-m-a-n-n-e. I have lived in Summers County for over 41 years, since I got out of Morgantown, and I'm a member of the West Virginia Farm Bureau, farmer and for many years, an avid hunter. And it's not that I'm against hunting, it's just that now I'm happy to be in the woods. I've been up and down the river. If I tried to name all of the places in the Gorge that I've visited or spent time, I probably couldn't name all of 'em.

So I feel that just as much as anyone here, I have a right to voice my opinion and I think we'd all agree that West Virginia is one of the greatest places in this country and the Gorge is a very special place whether you're a hunter, a tourist, a guide or kayaker or a climber. So we're here today to discuss whether or not the Gorge designation as a national park is appropriate. It certainly would let the nation know that the Gorge is part of a very select number of localities in this country that deserves the designation of national park.

Now if it wasn't for the restriction on hunting, I don't think that anyone here would oppose that. I can say as far as hunting goes that the least restrictive alternative for hunting and fishing is the best for all concerned. There, it seems to me that there are places that may be in the restricted area now that could be taken out and opened back up to hunting. I'm sure that the Park Service and the Committee and DNR will be looking into that. At the same time, if we have a national park designation by law there can be no hunting.

Let's leave those places that are heavily trafficked whether it's the Endless Wall, Cunard put in or the take outs, or up at Grandview or Long Point or places like that, we'll keep them as a park. Everything else should be a preserve. And if there was enough money, I would ask that the Committee tell the Park Service to buy 5,000 or 6,000 extra acres and open 'em to hunting.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Mr. SKAGGS. My name is John Skaggs, S-k-a-g-g-s. I'm a river guide, rock climbing guide, assistant pastor in the area. I've grown up in North Fayette County all of my life and my dad took me hunting and fishing—take me out of school and take me hunting and fishing just for fun—but I love the area, love West Virginia.

Some of the concerns that I have is I do think we need economic growth in Fayette County, I understand that. But if we doubled the attendance in our national park, national parks are there to preserve the land, preserve the access to that land and a fear that I have is that looking ahead is will the increased attendance in our national parks increase environmental impact, I've seen that over the 20, 30 years of being in the Gorge in some of the areas. If we increase that, then I appreciate our Park Service and their preservation of those areas, but will that increase regulation? I'm sure it will increase commercial fees and those kinds of things.

Not too bad if you're a large organization or a large company, but if you're a smaller company or smaller guiding service, some of those fees start to weed out some of the smaller companies. But those are some of the fears and concerns that I would have with increased fees, increased regulation and then also, perhaps, decrease in access. As an avid hunter and fisherman, I think that once land is lost it's not going to come back as far as access and I think responsibility in some of the high traffic areas could be an opportunity for restriction, but I hate to see any of our land being taken away as far as access for hunting.

Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir, very much.

[Applause.]

Ms. BERKLEY. While our next speaker is coming up, we'd ask Mr. Charles T. Earehart, Dr. Burnette and Ms. Angie Rosser to come down to the front.

Senator MANCHIN. If you all would come to the front on the sides there, and we will be prepared to go.

Yes, sir?

Mr. BLANKENSHIP. Senators, thank you. I'm Roy Blankenship. I speak under several hats.

Senator MANCHIN. Roy Blankenship? It is Blankenship.

Mr. BLANKENSHIP. Blankenship.

Senator MANCHIN. Blankenship, okay.

Mr. BLANKENSHIP. I run a small company on the New River. I have for 10 years. I've guided for 23 years. I am for tourism, but also fear this. You know, I grew up here, got 23 years, almost half my life, hunted about 45 days, I was on the water 90 days.

One of my questions as a small guide, will there be fees added for river usage? I have clients that come down. They fish with us, some of the other guides, and then they take their own boats out. Will they have to apply for permits? You know, some people get off work, they decide to roll out, short notice, so that's a concern.

I also speak as a hunter, I have friends that bear hunt. We don't have a whole lot of deer and we feel that's part of the reason. Will the bear hunters still be allowed to use dogs in the area?—is one of the concerns that they're having.

For myself, I'm also a schoolteacher and I'm concerned with kids. I understand a lot of this is about money for the area and I am for tourism, you know, I work in that, but also see it as a fluctuating industry. We have three major highways and railroads are here but yet, we're ranked 49th, I think, under Forbes as an economy to do business here. You know, there's more that needs to be done other than tourism. I'm for tourism, but there's a lot of other things we need to look at as well, you know, when you start just relying on one industry.

That's all I have to say.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Mr. EAREHART. Hello, I'm Charles Thomas Earehart. I've known Joe Manchin and his wife at First Baptist Church when they've been there. I met Ms. Capito at a fundraiser thing in New River Park, the first time I met her. And Rick Johnson and his wife, they go to church with me, in the same church.

Anyway, I love all these guys. Mr. Rappold, Larry Berry. Mr. Berry is a wonderful retired DNR guy, Department of Natural Resources, and he knows what my problem is, the Calvin Price State Forest suddenly got impacted by Nicky Joe Rahall's liberal group. They closed it down. Spice Ridge Trail is a historical trail going from, it starts over in Callaghan, goes up through near Sherwood Lake and Moncove Lake, goes across through Spice Ridge, goes through Little Creek, across the mountain to Marlinton. The Indians used it. It's part of the Indian trail that went across Route 6 interstate. It's part of that trail that went west.

The National Forest people came into our hunting camp. We had it leased since 1935. It was three acres in the middle of Calvin Price State Forest. There's about four of 'em came in. It was two DNR people. They ate dinner with us and they drank coffee and told us that they was going to put a gate on the trail to keep people from going up the trail, causing problems, some cans and bottles and stuff and partying. Alright, they told us we would get a key to that gate. It was only leasings, Calvin Price State Forest since 1935.

When New River Land Company owned it, they leased it. New River Land Company sold it to the Department of Natural Resources, West Virginia, using hunting and fishing license money. At the same time they did, it was near the same time that Plum Orchard Lake was funded by the same money, hunting and fishing license money of West Virginia.

This lady here, she works for a good company but she's not for the sportsmen of West Virginia. She's got a job to make money and she's not going to support the hunters and fishermen of West Virginia. Rick is making—

Senator MANCHIN. Sir? Sir, your time—

Mr. EAREHART. I'm not watching the red light, Mr. Manchin, because I'm trying—well, I'll just talk to these people—

Senator MANCHIN. No, no, sir. Sir?

Mr. EAREHART. Anyway, you all run me off.

Senator MANCHIN. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

Mr. EAREHART. They stole our trails—

Senator MANCHIN. No, no. This is, we are being fair for everybody. You have gone over a whole minute.

Mr. EAREHART. Mr. Manchin?

Senator MANCHIN. You are welcome to stay afterwards, sir, but you have a gentleman waiting to speak.

Mr. EAREHART. I've been waiting since—you turned the mic off—

Senator MANCHIN. No, we didn't turn the mic off.

[Authorities escort Mr. Earehart out of the room.]

Senator MANCHIN. Please sir, come on up, if you will.

Mr. EAREHART. Mr. Manchin doesn't want me to talk.

Senator MANCHIN. No, we want you to talk. We just want to let everybody else talk too, sir.

Mr. EAREHART. I've been waiting here—

Senator MANCHIN. You can talk.

Mr. EAREHART. All I've got to say is, it's a legal thing taken away from us. Rick's got a good job—

Senator MANCHIN. Sir, if you would move on up, come on up.

Mr. EAREHART. [Inaudible.]

Senator MANCHIN. Go ahead, sir.

Dr. BURNETTE. Hi.

Senator MANCHIN. Is it turned on? How do we turn—

Dr. BURNETTE. Hello. Hi, I'm Dr. Greg Burnette, B-u-r-n-e-t-t—

Senator MANCHIN. Doctor, if you would hold that up close to you.

Dr. BURNETTE. B-u-r-n-e-t-t-e. I'm a DNR Commissioner, but I want to make it known that I'm not speaking for the DNR or the Commission. Senator Manchin, Senator Capito, thank you.

I'm speaking as a sportsman for 62 years in West Virginia. First, I'm against taking away any hunting for the citizens. It's part of our heritage. Also, at age 62, I know those decisions are above my pay grade and sometimes I see the writing on the wall.

I want to throw out a term, mitigation. We have 77,000 acres. If 7,000 are taken away, can that be mitigated? Through habitat enhancement, additional property? If we're going to take it away from the hunters, let's give them something in return. That would, yeah, habitat enhancement, would increase the game numbers, deer, bear, turkey. It would also give time or give a habitat for critically endangered bird species, yellow-winged warblers, cerulean warbler. It would help the hunter, plus it would help the bird-watchers and hikers. It would be a win-win for everyone if that could be taken into consideration.

I don't know the law, don't know the legality, but that's what lawyers are paid for. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Doctor.

[Applause.]

Ms. BERKLEY. As our next speaker is coming, we'd like the following speakers to get ready—Mr. John Kauff, Mr. Mitchell Smith and Mr. Brad Jarrell.

Ms. ROSSER. Hello, I'm Angie Rosser, R-o-s-s-e-r, here representing the West Virginia Rivers Coalition. Thank you, Senators, for hosting this field hearing. It's really important, and I see how much you're valuing the public input here today. So very important for us here and exciting for us to see this effort to elevate this special, iconic place, this New River Gorge on a higher scale, some-

thing that we need to do more of in West Virginia and recognizing that our rivers and the outdoor recreational opportunities they attract is a valuable asset for economic development and diversification, something that we need to happen—an all-hands-on-deck effort to figure out what the future of our state and economic future will be here, especially in Southern West Virginia.

So I applaud your efforts and making and using this bill as a vehicle for that. And also acknowledging that for generations we have used this land to forage, hunt, fish, swim, hike, bird watch, boat, rock climb and bike and to hear that you are taking into consideration how to balance all of those uses in a responsible and fair way is also heartening.

What we're hearing is that the benefit of this is increased visitation. When we—and double-digit increases, okay. Our two concerns about that is the environmental footprint, the impact, and that we have the resources to protect and preserve the resource and also to preserve the visitor experience, that we are making sure, I mean, it's been mentioned already, currently people can't find parking spots at Endless Wall or at the Glade Creek put in. They're parking outside the designated area. That results in more litter, more sedimentation. That compromises both the visitor experience and environmental health.

So our question is, you know, what is the analysis in terms of how are we going to absorb and respond to this increased visitation? How do we make sure that Ms. Watts has the resources she needs in terms of staffing, in terms of infrastructure to help adapt to this increase? And how can we make this park, this place, better than it is now? How can this bill be an opportunity to make it better than it ever was before in terms of a visitor experience and possibly an expansion of the park so we have more for everybody to go around?

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you so much.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Just pick that up a little bit, John. There you go. You can pull that down if you want to. Okay.

Mr. KAUFF. John Kauff, K-a-u-f-f.

I'm a lifelong resident of Fayette County in Fayetteville, West Virginia, and I'm opposed to the redesignation and the reason being is because, lifelong hunter, but one of the big things is, is for one thing, just to, kind of, caveat on her, to maximize the exposure to the designation is the hunters use the Park Service, or the park, in the fall and the wintertime. Well, why not, you know, capitalize on that because that's when you would be, you know, the summertime is when the rafters and the rock climbers and all that. You would be capitalizing on the hunters from all over the country in the summer and then that circled area, I use that during the hunting season. Who uses that during hunting season? I mean, and then a lot of the hunters have already left because they, you know, they feel like we're not being heard, but I just wanted to say that.

Senator MANCHIN. Oh no, you are being heard.

Mr. KAUFF. Alright.

Senator MANCHIN. We appreciate you coming up, sir, thank you.

[Applause.]

Mr. SMITH. Hello, I'm Mitchell Smith. I'm a——

Senator MANCHIN. Mitchell, hold that up closer to you.

Mr. SMITH. I'm a property owner on the river, on the New River itself. I would like clarification over what rights and restrictions are going to be, you know, implemented to private owners, you know, for our property.

Senator MANCHIN. I am understanding there is no infringement, whatsoever, on private owners, but we will clarify everything and make sure the language is proper.

Mr. SMITH. And as, such as now we're under, governed by Raleigh County, or Fayette County Building, we just want to make sure there's going to—nothing—

Senator MANCHIN. That stays the same.

Mr. SMITH. —that they don't restrict what we can do with our property.

Senator MANCHIN. Yes, nothing changes.

Mr. SMITH. Okay.

And the second thing is, you know, by living there, you know, through the summer I see the tourist people come. It's a great thing and the Parks people do a wonderful job, but they're woefully understaffed. They don't have the resources. Your infrastructure sucks. I mean—

[Laughter.]

—just flat out. Your—they don't have the money to maintain what they have unless you, Senators, appropriate money for this. If you get a 20 percent increase of visitors, it's going to be really bad. I mean, on a busy day you can't get to the ramp anyway. So unless you're willing to put out the money, don't increase the amount of people who are coming or it's just going to be a very bad thing.

Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Ms. BERKLEY. As our next speaker is coming, would the following speakers be prepared? Mr. Keith Richardson, Mr. Nathaniel Begley and Mr. Steven Martin.

Mr. JARRELL. Hi, my name is Brad Jarrell. I grew up in Fayetteville and now live in Raleigh County.

As the last gentleman spoke about the infrastructure within the boundaries, I want to talk about the infrastructure outside of the boundaries. It's not ready for hundreds of thousands of people a year. Growing up in Fayette County, the roads, the utilities, all that stuff, it's deteriorating, it's gone, it's—they're not replacing it right now. There's areas that cannot handle this many people.

I'd like to know if all the hunters, I'm a hunter myself, if all the hunters are happy, everybody else is for the bill is happy, and this goes through, what happens to the surrounding area? As far as, I guess it comes down to money at that point. Where does that come from? The Parks are going to have their—they're probably going to get fees. They're probably going to do all that stuff, get their own money. Where does the surrounding area acquire that?

That's all I have. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Let me clarify real—I know we are over the allotted time. We are willing, Senator Capito and I will stay as long as possible to make sure everybody gets heard.

Also, the questions, when you all make your statements and there is like a question in your statement, I just asked the staff here and they will contact you back with the correct answer that we have, the way the bill has been drafted, to answer your question to the best of their ability. So everyone will get correct answers.

Sir, I am sorry.

Mr. MARTIN. Hello, I'm Steven Martin. It's spelled, S-t-e-v-e-n M-a-r-t-i-n.

First off, I want to thank you all for letting me, allowing me to speak today.

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

Mr. MARTIN. It's good to meet you, Senator Capito, you, Senator Manchin, all the distinguished guests.

What I wanted to talk about is something that's very near to my family and to me. It's not real popular. You might not know about it, but it's the Martin Graveyard. It's located inside of the Park, and we're concerned about the access to it. I do have the permit where we can go take care of it, but the road is deteriorating and we don't have access no more to actually drive to it and we're concerned with that.

And also, I would just like to make a point about me being a sportsman and my family. I've been on every trail in the park, me and my children, my wife. I want to continue to better use it, but I'm a hunter also and I think it could be for both the hunters and hikers, bicyclers, everybody. First off, there's a hunting season and it doesn't last that long, it's only a quarter of the year. So I think that there would be ways that that could work out in all areas of the park.

But I've never been shot at. I know the gentleman said that he was shot at by a hunter, but I'm sure you, Mr. Manchin, would know if somebody is bearing down on you with a rifle, you're going to kill 'em if you shoot at 'em.

Senator MANCHIN. I'm very cautious when I am hunting.

Mr. MARTIN. Sure. I've never been shot at while hunting that I know of, but I do think that it could all work together for both and it would be beneficial for West Virginia. Just like I said, there's a hunting season. It brings a tremendous amount.

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

Mr. MARTIN. And on the last note, don't make your decisions on the love of money. Don't let greed be a part in this decision-making.

[Applause.]

Make sure—doing what's right might not be the most popular thing. You see what I'm talking about.

Senator MANCHIN. Gotcha.

Mr. MARTIN. And I thank you for your time.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Ms. BERKLEY. While our next speaker is coming, would the following speakers prepare: Ms. Kristy Grant-Hart, Ms. Terri Giles and Ms. Sharon Cruikshank.

Mr. LOVE. Are you ready?

Senator MANCHIN. Ready.

Mr. LOVE. Are you ready to roll with this?

Senator MANCHIN. Ready to rock and roll.

Mr. LOVE. My name is Peyton Love, and I've been blessed by the good Lord to be able to spend a good bit of my life in that big circle up in that video.

Senator MANCHIN. I have been on a river with Peyton too.

[Laughter.]

Mr. LOVE. I've been a kayaker for 22 years and I love it, and I've got a lot of questions answered here. I really appreciate you all trying to do something for the state.

Senator MANCHIN. Right.

Mr. LOVE. After rafting with you this year—

Senator MANCHIN. Yes.

Mr. LOVE. —you're my favorite politician.

Senator MANCHIN. Oh boy.

[Laughter.]

He threw me in the river too.

[Laughter.]

Mr. LOVE. I did.

Anyway, my concern was, you know, are they going to fee me because, like Bill Lehrter said, sometimes we get off work, we go do a river run. We want to be able to just go, "oh, we're going to do a river run," and not have to do a permit. Now with the numbers going down, it hasn't been going up, but I've been hearing people say it's going up. It hadn't been going up, it's gone up on the weekends. And it sounds like this proposal, I'm not against, nor am I for it, I'm on the fence throwing pebbles at both sides. So my pebble I'm going to throw to this side is why are you going to put money into the tourism only if we become a park?

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. You are going to—

Mr. LOVE. I'm not going to drop a mic because I own a mic, and I know how much they cost.

[Laughter.]

Anyway, that's my biggest question on that.

Senator MANCHIN. We are going to get you an answer to that too, Peyton. We will get you an answer.

Mr. LOVE. You know, I mean, let's—we used to do—I worked at another company before Adventures on the Gorge. I love my company, thank you guys for having me. I hope you'll have me after this talk.

[Laughter.]

But back when I started this, they gave us promotional money and the numbers were better. There is another thing with the baby boomers. You're a baby boomer, right? And you took your kids and you went on a week-long vacation. My people, Generation X, they go just for the weekend and now you have the Millennials. You can't get them off the cell phones.

[Laughter.]

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Peyton.

[Applause.]

Ms. GRANT-HART. Hello, Senators, thank you so much for having this discussion. My name is Kristy Grant-Hart. K-r-i-s-t-y G-r-a-n-t-H-a-r-t. And I have a different perspective, because I'm a new mountaineer. So my husband and I came and visited two years ago, absolutely fell in love with the place and we bought 38 acres and 12 cabins and are now running a business in West Virginia. And I think—I spent the last nine years in England. I want to speak on the international perspective.

My in-laws have visited basically 10 national parks, and they come because of that designation. If you're looking for international visitors and for the reputation of West Virginia throughout the entire United States and the world, this makes an enormous difference. People see national parks differently and in order to grow the reputation to what, I think, it should be, I mean, I came here and said, this is the prettiest place I've ever been and I wouldn't have known that if I hadn't come and that designation will bring people who will tell their friends that they should come here because it's amazing.

Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Do we have more, Terri?

Ms. BERKLEY. Yes, sir. The last four speakers are Mr. Charles McCue, Ms. Heidi Prior, Ms. Elizabeth Slone and Ms. Debbie Lamey.

Senator MANCHIN. If they would step to the front on the sides there, and we will go in order.

Thank you.

Ms. GILES. Hello, my name is Terri Giles, and I'm from Hinton, West Virginia, and I grew up there and moved back there to run a business that focuses on environmental sustainability and economic development. I wanted to thank both Senator Manchin and Senator Capito for leading the charge on this.

As the previous speaker mentioned, a designation of a national park changes the story for everyone here. While I'm concerned about the money for the infrastructure as well and also the access for hunters, having grown up there, we've put millions of dollars in Summers County for my business. I'm the Vice President of Appalachian Headwaters. We're doing big things in Summers County, as the Commissioner mentioned, in conjunction with other counties, so we would like to have our areas that are very special in the world to be recognized.

And I thank both of you for leading the charge on this. I believe, sincerely, that both of you will consider all the wants and needs of the citizens here in our area of how we can have a compromise, to both have a national park as well as access for our hunters and other people who enjoy the outdoors, including—and please encourage people to stop spraying. I run the Appalachian Beekeeping Collective, and we don't want our bees killed anymore.

But thank you both.

Senator MANCHIN. Thanks, Terri.

[Applause.]

Ms. CRUIKSHANK. Good morning.

Senator CAPITO. Morning.

Ms. CRUIKSHANK. Thank you all for coming to our area.

Senator MANCHIN. A little closer, if you will, and your name, please.

Ms. CRUIKSHANK. A little closer and my name is Sharon Cruikshank, spelled C-r-u-i-k-s-h-a-n-k.

I'm speaking for myself. I have no company. I represent no one today, but I did want to speak. I support this endeavor; however, I have concerns. I'm not a hunter. I'm not a rafter. I'm not a rock climber. I do hike and I used to ride my horses in the Gorge quite often.

My concerns are the parking. We have issues with parking. We have people being towed. This isn't what we want to have for our companies, whether you're a fishing company, hunting company, climbing company, we want to be open to everything. I think there's a way that we can have a compromise, that we have hunting as well as the national park.

My other concern is water quality, the infrastructure. I think these issues, if we're looking at all this then we need to look at the whole picture and not just limit ourselves to one issue or another. We're all neighbors, and we all get along. Thank you all for your time very much.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Is this our last?

Ms. BERKLEY. Two more after——

Senator MANCHIN. Two more presenters after this, okay. Thank you all for being so patient.

Mr. McCUE. My name's Charles McCue. Last name is spelled, M-c-C-u-e. I'm a lifelong resident and a native of here, in West Virginia. I've got a formal education in forestry and wildlife, and I've spent most of my career guiding recreational industries, working on the rivers as a raft guide, working out West as a big game guide. I come here today to represent the West Virginia Trappers Association (WVTA). I'm a Director on the Board of Directors. We are a non-profit, outdoorsmen and women association dedicated to the education of better wildlife management and ethical harvesting.

First, I would like to say we, the outdoorsmen and women of the WVTA, are pleased with the current recreational opportunities and the Park Service management of our national recreation area.

Our first and biggest concern is the loss of public land use rights due to urban and suburban and rules for all, higher land taxes causing the leasing of private landholdings and more government restrictions on private land. We, the people of West Virginia, have seen a continual loss of land use rights on both private and public land, leaving many residents and visitors of our state with only the use of our public lands. Creating a national park, we are sure, through historical fact, will reduce, restrict or maybe even remove many or all of these rights.

We at the West Virginia Trappers Association already know the right to harvest fur-bearing animals was taken away immediately upon the making of the national recreation area thus removing the

wildlife manager's ability to control certain animal populations in these ecosystems. Many of the residents of our state depend on these renewable resources in our daily and annual lives.

Pardon me.

The concerns are many bringing the West Virginia Trappers Association, being represented by 500+ outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen of the State of West Virginia, to the conclusion that we do not support the making of our recreation area into a national park. Thank you for your time and consideration. Have a good day.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

[Applause.]

Ms. PRIOR. Hi, my name is Heidi Prior. I am here as just a resident of Fayette County today and a mom and I think as we saw the folks that have come up and speak I'd like to say and note that there weren't as many females speaking and so, I find myself in a duty to speak on behalf of the mothers of the New River Gorge.

I want my six-year-old to be proud of where he's from and this would do that, and I think that's more important. I want him to have good schools. I want him to have a job when he graduates, and yes, I eat meat. I'm not a hunter, but I eat meat and that is the heart and soul of what we're trying to do here is raise the next generation. So the men have definitely spoke, what I encourage is the women and the moms and the dads to speak as well and—I'm nervous and I'm talking about my kid.

[Laughter.]

But the other thing too is I do dabble in politics a bit. There is a bill called Restore Our Parks Act. I don't know a lot about it, but if you care about her funding [motions toward Ms. Watts], vote for that bill. There's answers to all this. So, please, you guys, think of the next generation more than your hobby. Thanks.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you. Well said.

[Applause.]

Ms. SLONE. Hi, my name is Elizabeth Slone, S-l-o-n-e.

The New River Gorge is beautiful, but I don't believe that it is up to the national park standards. Would Wolf Creek be the gem of the new park? Its headwaters are polluted from injection wells near the headwaters. How many national parks have you visited where you can see a sign which reads, "Warning, No Swimming, Fecal Coliform"?

[Applause.]

Such a sign exists at Keeneys Creek. If this does become a park, I just really want to see that we spend the money cleaning up the Gorge before we spend it on parking lots.

The last thing I'll say is about the hunting area and you saying that it's too steep, it doesn't get used. The steepness is what makes it the challenge and that's what's awesome about hunting. And the turkey that I pulled out of my deep freeze last week and made turkey soup with, it was from that area.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

This is our last speaker and, again, we thank all of you so much. We will have a few comments.

Ms. LAMEY. Hi, my name is Debbie Lamey. I did not plan to speak today. I'll try not to bumble this, but I appreciate the opportunity, Senators.

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

Ms. LAMEY. I am here personally, but also as a member of Friends of New River Gorge National River. I have grown up in this area. I grew up with hunters. I grew up with coal miners. I am married to an avid fisherman. I care about our area in general and everything that happens to it. I am in support of anything that will benefit our area, bring more people to see the beautiful place that I have enjoyed my whole life.

I have climbed it. I have hiked it. We raft it. We frequent the restaurants. And one thing that I would like to say is that so many people here seem to be concerned with fees. Our park has never charged fees. Our park does not plan to charge fees but one way that you can help assuage that is do you—step into your visitor center and drop money in the donation box. Go out and enjoy your park. Go hunt. I support you to hunt. However, I think we have to co-exist. I have stepped off of a hiking trail and walked up to a hunter with a gun and a vest. That is highly uncomfortable for me. I ask that you respect my area and let me enjoy my park as well as you enjoying my park.

And another thing that you can do is our group, Friends of New River Gorge, our whole entire existence is based upon supporting the national park in whatever form, whether it is contained—whether it continues to be a national river or it becomes a national park. We will continue to do that. So every dollar that you donate to Friends of New River Gorge goes straight to the park and whatever their needs are, things that the government might not be able to hand them funds for right now, but they have needs for and that we can help them support and give them money for and fundraise for.

So please, if you're going to utilize the park, please support it in other ways. Give to our organization, listen to other legislation that's out there and give to the National Park Service Visitor Centers.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you so much.

[Applause.]

As we wrap up, let me say a few things for housekeeping, if I can. I want to recognize also, the people that, again, that made this possible. First of all, to our video, Dan, and to our audio, I want to thank them. To Al Hancock, who came all the way from Bluefield. He is a two-war veteran, served our country tremendously. I appreciate him.

[Applause.]

To the Energy Committee that made this a formal public hearing for the record. They came from Washington, DC. We have David, Peter, Renae, Sam, Lucy, Annie, Darla and Lindsay and all of them—raise your hands, raise your hands.

[Applause.]

This is our Democrat and Republican staffs working together. Senator Capito's staff has been working extremely hard, and we appreciate all of them—Travis, Baxter, Adam, Todd, Mary Elizabeth.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Senator MANCHIN. To my staff, I am very proud of. I have Mara, Terri, Ali, Marcus and Wes.

[Applause.]

These are the people that made it possible and also, as far as closing statements, Senator Capito, if you have a statement to be made, and we will close.

Senator CAPITO. Thank you, Senator Manchin. Thank all of you, and I want to thank the staff. When he mentioned the staff that came from DC, I said, well, that is economic development. We could have hearings here.

[Laughter.]

But we are glad they get to see our beautiful part of the state.

I think the thing that strikes me more than anything is how passionate everybody is and well thought out the comments were. I know they were very representative of everybody in the audience. But it is about, I think, the balance is the issue that we are trying to find here because there were 45 people and I didn't get a chance to really split it, who opposed, but it was pretty evenly split, I think. But there were several people who said if we could make some changes here and there that may tip the balance for them, and that is the purpose of this meeting is for us to go back—Senator Manchin and I are on the same page here—working together to try to make the changes that we have heard today.

The last thing I would say is I want to thank our panel, but particularly there was a lot of comment and concern about the over usage of the park, the lack of infrastructure of the park and the next to the last speaker mentioned a bill that both of us are very interested in, the Restore Our Parks Act, and I think we may be able to get that over. That is a bipartisan bill that will address some of the backlog in the national parks, and I think it would help here as well.

[Applause.]

So I would encourage you to look at that.

I just really want to thank Senator Manchin for being the Ranking Member of a great Committee, and for bringing the Committee here. Thank you.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Senator.

I will say "ditto" to all of that, but let me tell you that in the most toxic atmosphere of politics I have ever seen in my life that we live in today, this shows you how a civil meeting could be held and should be held. I am so proud of West Virginia.

[Applause.]

This bill has been conceived and considered in the most bipartisan way and not a political way at all, looking at how we best enhance our state and opportunities and protect our heritage, and we are trying to take all that into consideration. All of the statements you made are on video and on record, and they will be answered. It will be taken into consideration when S. 2555 is marked up.

Senator Capito will come in as part, not on the Committee, but she will come in and testify for the bill too, and what we have been able to find out which makes it even more inclusive. So I am just

so proud. I know how difficult this is as you all have mentioned, quite a few of the people who testified mentioned, this is difficult because you were concerned about your fellow Fayette Countian or fellow West Virginian that they might be upset with you, because you took one view and they took another. Well, welcome to our world.

[Laughter.]

But what we do is we have to find a way to come together, that is all, and really respect everyone and your positions you have taken. It has been a wonderful hearing. It is something that we look forward to, everyone involved here, all of our expert panel and all of them for testifying.

Thank you. God bless each and every one of you, and we are dismissed.

[Whereupon, at 12:03 p.m. the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX MATERIAL SUBMITTED

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2555

To designate the New River Gorge National River in the State of West Virginia as the “New River Gorge National Park and Preserve”, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 26, 2019

Mrs. CAPITO (for herself and Mr. MANCHIN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To designate the New River Gorge National River in the State of West Virginia as the “New River Gorge National Park and Preserve”, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

4 This Act may be cited as the “New River Gorge Na-
5 tional Park and Preserve Designation Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. DESIGNATION OF NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL**
2 **PARK AND NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL**
3 **PRESERVE, WEST VIRGINIA.**

4 (a) REDESIGNATION.—The New River Gorge Na-
5 tional River established under section 1101 of the Na-
6 tional Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C.
7 460m–15) shall be known and designated as the “New
8 River Gorge National Park and Preserve”, consisting of—

9 (1) the New River Gorge National Park; and

10 (2) the New River Gorge National Preserve.

11 (b) NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PARK.—The
12 boundaries of the New River Gorge National Park referred
13 to in subsection (a)(1) shall be the boundaries depicted
14 as “Proposed National Park Area” on the map entitled
15 “New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Proposed
16 Boundary”, numbered 637/163,199, and dated September
17 2019.

18 (c) NEW RIVER GORGE NATIONAL PRESERVE;
19 BOUNDARY.—The boundaries of the New River Gorge Na-
20 tional Preserve referred to in subsection (a)(2) shall be
21 the boundaries depicted as “Proposed National Preserve
22 Area” on the map entitled “New River Gorge National
23 Park and Preserve Proposed Boundary”, numbered 637/
24 163,199, and dated September 2019.

1 **SEC. 3. ADMINISTRATION.**

2 (a) IN GENERAL.—The New River Gorge National
3 Park and Preserve shall be administered by the Secretary
4 of the Interior (referred to in this Act as the “Secretary”)
5 in accordance with—

6 (1) this Act;

7 (2) the laws generally applicable to units of the
8 National Park System, including—

9 (A) section 100101(a), chapter 1003, and
10 sections 100751(a), 100752, 100753, and
11 102101 of title 54, United States Code; and

12 (B) chapter 3201 of title 54, United States
13 Code; and

14 (3) title XI of the National Parks and Recreation
15 Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 460m–15 et seq.).

16 (b) HUNTING AND FISHING.—

17 (1) HUNTING.—Hunting within the New River
18 Gorge National Preserve shall be administered by
19 the Secretary—

20 (A) in the same manner as hunting was
21 administered on the day before the date of en-
22 actment of this Act in those portions of the
23 New River Gorge National River designated as
24 the New River Gorge National Preserve by sec-
25 tion 2(c); and

26 (B) in accordance with—

1 (i) section 1106 of the National Parks
2 and Recreation Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C.
3 460m-20); and

4 (ii) other applicable laws.

5 (2) FISHING.—Fishing within the New River
6 Gorge National Park and Preserve shall be adminis-
7 tered by the Secretary—

8 (A) in the same manner as fishing was ad-
9 ministered within the New River Gorge Na-
10 tional River on the day before the date of enact-
11 ment of this Act; and

12 (B) in accordance with—

13 (i) section 1106 of the National Parks
14 and Recreation Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C.
15 460m-20); and

16 (ii) other applicable laws.

17 (3) PRIVATE LAND.—Nothing in this Act pro-
18 hibits hunting, fishing, or trapping on private land
19 in accordance with applicable State and Federal
20 laws.

21 (c) COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL WATERCRAFT
22 SERVICES.—Commercial recreational watercraft services
23 within the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve
24 shall be administered by the Secretary in accordance with
25 section 402 of the West Virginia National Interest River

1 Conservation Act of 1987 (16 U.S.C. 460m–15 note; Pub-
2 lic Law 100–534).

3 (d) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, reg-
4 ulation, document, paper, or other record of the United
5 States to the New River Gorge National River shall be
6 considered to be a reference to the “New River Gorge Na-
7 tional Park” or the “New River Gorge National Preserve”,
8 as appropriate.

9 **SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

10 There are authorized to be appropriated such sums
11 as are necessary to carry out this Act.

○

From: [Russell Ackerman](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:14:25 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Russell Ackerman and I live at 405 Grand Ave. Lake Zurich IL 60047. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Name

Date

Russell Ackerman

ACK-TEMP MECHANICAL SERVICES INC.
805 Oakwood Rd. Suite B
Lake Zurich IL, 60047
O-1-847-719-2665
F-1-847-474-4444
C-1-847-774-1136
rackerman@acktemp.com
www.acktemp.com
Com Ed Trade Ally Partner
Nicor Trade Ally Partner
Peoples Gas Trade Ally Partner
North Shore Gas Trade Ally Partner

Desert Aire Factory Trained and Certified Representative

“ACK-TEMP Mechanical Services Inc has been putting all your Mechanical needs at a level of comfort since 1980”

Fusion Fabrication and Welding Inc.

847-438-7051
www.fusionfabricationandwelding.com

From: [Donna Alexander](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 10:59:54 AM

Dear US Senators,

I am writing to show my support for S.2555 National Park & Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Donna Alexander, CPA, CFE
Alexander Business Consulting Services, A.C.
108 N Main Street
Petersburg, WV 26847
(304) 257-4992 Office | (804) 370-6784 Cell

From: [Kelly Armstrong](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Enerov\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 7:25:27 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

From: Kelly Armstrong
37 Pennsylvania Ave
California, PA 15419
724-797-1719

We vacationed at ACE ADVENTURE RESORT during the summer of 2019. My kids loved every second. Supporting this is wholehearted. Anything that gets word of ACE out there I support. What wonderful experiences it brought to both of my children. They have a new opinion of West Virginia, the majestic scenery and experience within the state. We, as a family, made the commitment to return to ACE every year, and to make it "our family vacation spot". Sadly, my youngest boy was diagnosed with leukemia in early February. One of his first questions, after receiving word of his diagnosis and related restrictions was, "what about ACE". The response from his physicians was initially, "what is that". After explaining what it was and fielding questions about how to go about making reservations, as they were quite excited to experience it for themselves, was, sadly, "likely not this year, but maybe next".

Just that Jake's first question was not about school, or soccer, or football, but rather about returning to ACE speaks volumes about the momentous experience this 12 year old boy had there. All boys should experience 5 days at this wonderful place, and whatever makes that happen, I'm all for it. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kelly L. Armstrong, RN

From: [Amy Ashworth](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:18:19 AM

Amy Ashworth
P.O. Box 183
Ona, WV 25545

02/25/2020

Dear US Senators,

My name is Amy Ashworth and I live in Ona, WV. I've gone to the New River Gorge area a few times and every time I go it amazes me how beautiful it is. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. This area should be preserved so everyone can have the chance to enjoy the natural beauty that is West Virginia.

Sincerely,
Amy Ashworth

From: [Doug Aspy](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 11:20:50 AM

Dear U S Senators,

My name is Douglas Aspy and I live at 11975 Redpoll Trail, Noblesville, Indiana. I am writing to show my support for S.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and State of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Douglas Aspy

From: [Ryan Aspy](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 12:29:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Ryan Aspy and I live at 13596 Craig Ave, Noblesville IN 46060. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Ryan Aspy

25 Feb 2020

From: [Travis A](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 12:55:20 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Travis Aspy and I live at 13303 Toka Ct, Huntersville, NC 28078. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Best regards,

Travis Aspy
704-728-5259
travisaspy@gmail.com

2/26/2020

From: [Kelly Babiak](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 8:29:25 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Kelly Babiak and I live at 1603 Claire St Charleston, WV 25302. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Kelly Babiak

02/25/2020

From: [Darrell Bailey](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 4:47:02 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Darrell Bailey and I live at 100 Squire Lane, Beckley, WV. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Darrell Bailey

3/2/2020

From: [Ball, Trent](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 2:38:28 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Trent Ball and I live at 37100 Scout Rd, Logan Ohio 43138. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Trent Ball

2/25/2020

From: info@hvacteacher.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 3:01:14 PM

As someone who has enjoyed the many splendors of West Virginia for almost 50 years I fully support the bill to designate the New River Gorge a National Park. Not is the area worthy of such a designation, in doing so, we can protect this natural wonder in it's current state without fear of commercial development that would absolutely alter and likely destroy the ambience and beauty of this truly remarkable resource. I pray you do the right thing by supporting and passing this bill. Thank you.

Regards,

Jack Bartell

1044 Porte Harbour Arch, Unit 104
 Hampton, VA 23664
info@hvacteacher.com
 1-405-664-2075

From: [Rebecca Baughman](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve".
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 4:16:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Rebecca Baughman and I live at 6216 Eds Road Mineral, VA 23117. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. Our National Parks are a true treasure. I'm thankful for the forethought of those before us. Let's add to what they have started.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Baughman

02/25/2020

--

Rebecca Baughman
LCMS Head Librarian
1009 Davis Highway
Mineral, VA 23117
540-894-5457
<https://lcmscreationstation.weebly.com/>



From: [Spencer Beeching](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:42:50 AM

My name is Spencer C. Beeching and I reside at 3671 Crooked Tree Drive in Mason, OH 45040. I write this in full support of S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I lived in West Virginia for 7 years and was introduced to the very special beauty of the New River Gorge area. It should be protected. While I moved away from West Virginia, I still visit the New River Gorge several times a year because it has so positively impacted me and my family of 6.

Sincerely,
Spencer C. Beeching

From: [Jeff Bice](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:15:22 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jeffrey Bice and I live at 148 Ribbon Ln, Mount Nebo WV 26679-8182. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I think that the New River Gorge area becoming a National Park will be an economic boost for the region as well as having a positive impact for the state of West Virginia.

Thank you for your time to review my comments.

Sincerely,
Jeff Bice
3/2/2020

From: [James Black](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 7:47:55 PM

I grew up in Beckley WV and know first-hand how the people of the region worked hard to produce the product (coal) which powered the industrial revolution in this country. Now that the industry is struggling to maintain a secure future, the region is hampered by a lack of an economic future due to its location and topography. The only solution is to transform the New River Gorge National River into a National Park. I feel the Beckley/Oak Hill region could become something similar to what has occurred in Asheville NC. The proximity of outdoor activities, along with the cache of being a National Park will make this more than a dream. This needs to be done NOW. Ignore the hunters - there are plenty of places to hunt in WV. I mountain bike in the region and know first-hand the State Forests are available for hunting in the fall. This cannot be a deal-breaker.

James Black
537 Olde Mill Dr.
Westerville OH 43082

From: [Ellen Bor](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: S. 2555 NRG NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 12:46:50 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Ellen Bor and I live at 2350 NE 14th Street Causeway, Pompano Beach, FL 33062. I am writing to express my support for S. 2555 NRG NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE. I believe this designation will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

I have been visiting the National Parks, especially those in Florida frequently. I am always extremely grateful that our government has honored and preserved the beauty of our country. A Natural Beauty Should be Preserved like a Monument.

In Kind Appreciation

ELLEN Bor

From: [Erica Bowe](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 3:47:27 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Erica Bowe and I live at 1257 Jersey Avenue, Morgantown, WV 26505. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,
Erica Bowe
February 27, 2020

From: [Bobby Bower](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: S 2555
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 11:52:49 AM

Thanks you for your consideration in helping Southern West Virginia reinvent its economy. Coal, natural gas and timber have been important for our economy for decades. It is good to see people embracing other options for the future.

Tourism growth over the last few decades has proven vital to our region. This includes: climbing, biking, hunting, fishing, ATV trails, camping, zip lines, whitewater, hiking, and more. The economic outreach is even greater when the total includes the food, amenities and accommodations for hundreds of thousands of visitors.

The New River National River, Gauley River and Bluestone National Recreation areas are all cornerstones of our community. Much of our economic growth can be directly attributed to receiving these National designations.

As we continue to build on this re-invention, Southern West Virginia is ready for the next layer. With the help of your committee we can polish diversify the economy, the National River, by becoming an official National Park and Preserve. All of the components are already in place. The National Park and Preserve designation would increase recognition. This new status would serve to facilitate our sustainability and continued growth along with even greater opportunities.

PRO River Outfitters is a Hunting and Fishing outfitter located in Fayetteville, WV.

We fully support the new designation of the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.

Sincerely,

Robert Bower Jr

304-575-5252

From: [Sara Boyle](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 4:02:51 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Sara Boyle and I live at 3377 River Landings Blvd. Hilliard, OH. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

**Sincerely,
Sara Boyle**

Feb. 25, 2020

From: [Kelly](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 10:34:35 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Kelly Breeden and I live at 4026 Font Hill Dr, Ellicott City, MD 21042. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Kelly Breeden

03/04/2020

From: [Paul Breuer](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Support for S 2555 NRG National Park
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 3:48:42 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Paul Breuer and I live at Nettie WV and work in Fayette co. at Country Road Cabins and have been a white water rafting company owner for 45 years and a whitewater guide. Tourism is VERY important to Local Jobs. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

The Whitewater Cowboy
All the Best
Paul Breuer
paul@wvcabins.com

From: tractorbarsteve@frontier.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 3:32:53 PM

Dear U.S. Senators;

My name is Stephen M. Brown
and I live at 546 Wilderness Hwy. Mt.Nebo, WV 26679. I am writing to show my support for S.2555
National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of WV and Lord knows we
need all the help we can get. Steve Brown

From: [Linda Burgin](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 4:53:18 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Linda Burgin and I live at 107 Myers Avenue, Beckley, WV 25801. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

**Sincerely,
Linda Burgin
107 Myers Avenue
Beckley, WV 25801**

Date: February 24, 2020

From: [Buddy Butler](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:03:07 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Charles Butler and I live in Williamstown, WV. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this designation would significantly help tourism in the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Charles "Buddy" Butler

March 2, 2020

--

Buddy Butler - Partner
Narrative by **New South Media**
304-615-9884
[New South Media](#)

From: mountainmodern@aol.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Cc: info@info.onthegorge.com
Subject: S. 2555
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 5:50:25 PM

Dear U. S. Senators,

My name is Steven Canterbury. My wife and I own property that adjoins the Nutall heirs' land and the New River Gorge, although I reside in South Charleston, West Virginia.

I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe that this will help not only the immediate region in the southern part of the state, but the entire State of West Virginia. Indeed, this will be another gem in the national park crown that is so important for everyone in the nation.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Steven Canterbury
268 Dead End Road
South Charleston, WV 25309

February 26, 2020

From: [robert.carpenter](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 11:39:19 AM

Hello,
My name is Robert Carpenter.
I live at 2209 Raven Trail West Columbia SC 29169.
I am writing to show my support for S.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve.
I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.
Sincerely,
Robert Carpenter
2/26/2020

From: [John Casper](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve".
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 8:35:43 PM

I support this
John Casper
9800 Sunset Dr, Rockville, MD 20850

From: [Kim Casto](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: S2555 Field Hearing Public Comment Submission
Date: Friday, March 6, 2020 6:55:25 AM

Hello, Senator Capito, Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Manchin, and the members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. I ask that my remarks be added to the public comments regarding the February 22, 2020 Field Hearing that took place at Tamarack in Beckley, WV for S2555.

My name is Agnes Casto and both my husband and I attended the field hearing to hear witnesses and public input regarding the New River Gorge National River proposed change to the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve. Thank you for your committee's interest in the people of West Virginia and more specifically the communities and user groups of the New River Gorge.

I moved to West Virginia in 1976. After graduating from Glenville State College, I met my husband whose family came to WV before the Revolutionary War. Our children are 10th generation West Virginians. My husband grew up in St. Albans, WV, is a graduate of WVIT and was introduced to New River and rafting in 1975 by Wildwater Unlimited, Inc. We met as private boaters (kayakers) and moved to Fayetteville to be closer to the New River. Raising our family here was an intentional life choice that required us to live simply and creatively. The tradeoff was having the New River Gorge in our back yard.

After listening intently to the witnesses: Lizzie Watts, Superintendent of the New River Gorge National River, Rick Johnson, Owner of Rivers Expeditions, Jerod Harman, President of the West Virginia Wildlife Federation, and Chelsea A. Ruby, Commissioner for West Virginia Tourism, **I came away with the realization that this decision to change the New River Gorge National River to a National Park and Preserve is moving too quickly.** I say this for the following reasons:

1) Lizzie Watts, Superintendent of the NRG National River **is not in full support of the proposed change.** In fact, she asks in her remarks, "we would like to continue to work with you and the Members of the Committee on suggested alternatives." This is really a big deal. The NPS is your trusted resource in this process. They know the impact on infrastructure and user groups, as well as obstacles that come into play when making the change you are suggesting. What is being proposed by your committee is not the best alternative. **It seemed to me that she was asking you to slow down this process and make sure you are doing what is best at this time.**

2) We are being told the primary reason Senate Bill 2555 came to the forefront is because the rafting industry is stagnant and has been declining

since 1990 and the name change to National Park will bring increased visitors, which will lead to an increase in rafting numbers. The state of West Virginia has been pouring advertising dollars into the rafting industry for many years with little effect. In the mid-1980's there were 26 rafting companies all positioning themselves for their future as part of West Virginia's budding new industry that showcased our state's "Wild and Wonderful" New River. Now there are two large companies and a handful of smaller companies competing for rafting dollars. Forty years ago, rafting was the only option for visitors to play in the New River Gorge, but that is not the case anymore. The reality is that the New River Gorge's visitor numbers have been increasing steadily since 1990 and they are utilizing a diversity of outdoor activities. **Changing the New River Gorge National River into a National Park isn't going to change this new reality for the rafting industry.**

3) The establishment of the [BS Summit Bechtel Reserve](#), straddling Raleigh and Fayette County along the New River and the [Wild Ridge Young Life Camp](#), north of the park in Nicholas County are bringing new [tourism dollars to](#) the Region, along with thousands of visitors associated with those organizations. The New River Gorge is now the "go to" place for non-profit youth organizations to experience "High Adventure" and life changing experiences that impact lives. These youth organizations are in their infancy. Each year they multiply the number of visitors traveling to this area to those destinations. **The impact this new market is having on the New River Gorge and the communities that share that space with them is huge.**

4) West Virginia receives hundreds of missionary groups to "help build and assist communities struggling due to poverty and natural disaster." They stop and play in the New River Gorge while they are here as well, but the sad thing is that they need to come here at all. Education, water and sewer infrastructure, and dependable jobs are the solution to poverty. The 45,000 jobs that Chelsea Ruby announced in her remarks from the Department of Tourism aren't the type of jobs that communities can use to build economic success. These are not the kind of jobs to build thriving communities and raise families. **By creating the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, you are cementing this area of Southern WV as the Tourism Region of the state ensuring that manufacturing and industries providing real living wage jobs that enable people to raise their family will be unwelcome and discouraged.**

5) I'm sorry that your committee was not present for the field meeting at Tamarack because you would've heard in the voices of the hunters, representing every type of hunting organization in the state, their frustration with the way this bill dismisses all they were promised when the New River Gorge National River was created. **They spoke with one voice, reminding Senators Manchin and Capito what the Senators should already know: the promise made in 1978 to preserve and**

allow hunting in the New River Gorge National River. Those areas were defined over many conversations and meetings. The end result was agreed upon and assurances were made. For this bill to be dismissive of those promises, and when questioned by the hunters, to be told that it's only 4000 acres more or less and there's plenty left is outrageous. Rick Johnson of Rivers Expedition's remarks were disingenuous. He is, however, correct when he said, "without this purchase of land by the park service there would be little to no public land to hunt on in this area since most of the large tracts of private land have been leased by private member-only hunting clubs." **With that said, it is a no brainer that the 4000+ acres being taken away from the Public Hunting sections of the preserve is a really big deal! It is disconcerting that the WV Department of Natural Resources was not at the meeting to represent the interests of the hunters.**

6) The subject of user fees to pay for increased dollars needed to build new access points, parking, stabilize trails and overlooks from increased usage, additional labor costs to add staffing throughout the park, etc. are going to come from somewhere and it is unrealistic to expect the Federal Government to cover that cost. There was a time when our national parks were funded with federal dollars, but that is not what happens now. User fees are also used to control popular areas and limit usage. That is the future for this National Park you propose **and dismissing the obvious and brushing off the question with "that is not the intent at this time" lacks transparency and honest dialogue.**

If you really want to have an impact on the economic success and diversity of Southern West Virginia then spend your time and resources on broadband infrastructure for our state. Developing internet access opens up the possibility for those same outdoor enthusiasts to work from home, raise their families, and create businesses in the place that they play. Access to high speed internet is a "game changer" for everyone who lives, works, and plays in WV. It would complement the outdoor emphasis of our region and strengthen new, diverse, and existing businesses.

Again, I ask you to slow down, spend some time with Lizzie Watts and her staff to study and listen to the many user groups and individuals who are going to be affected by this change. I've heard the argument that increased visitors mean increased rafting numbers. Defining success by rafting numbers is not the future of tourism in this area nor is it the real reason for this change. There's more going on here and this bill needs time to mature in your committee.

Again, thank you for accepting my input to this very important conversation,

Agnes Casto
1884 Maple Ave.
Fayetteville, WV 25840
304-574-3567
castos5@frontier.com

From: [loria_reid](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:30:31 AM

My name is Loria Cavallo and I live at 107 Forest Drive, Clarksburg, WV 26301.
I am writing to voice my support for making the New River Gorge area a National Park and Preserve. It is one of my favorite places to visit. It's beauty should be preserved for all time.
Thank you,
Loria Cavallo
107 Forest Drive
Clarksburg WV 26301

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Andrea Chev](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:13:55 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Andrea Cheuvront and I live at 608 Dylan Drive, Fairmont WV 26554. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Andrea Cheuvront

March 2, 2020

From: [Patty Colgrove](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:47:50 PM

To Whom it may concern,

I am emailing you to ask you to support designating the New River Gorge a National Park and Preserve. It is a special place. We have lived all over the United States and have seen many beautiful places, and this area is one of the most beautiful we have seen. It is a real treasure. Please support creating a National Park so that future generations can enjoy the amazing beauty of this area.

Thank you,

**Patricia K Colgrove
2736 Riverbed Ln
Akron, OH 44312
330-877-1060**

From: [Will Cowdrick](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 1:59:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is William Cowdrick and I live at 7780 Trailridge Dr, Fort Mill, SC 29708. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

William Cowdrick
2/26/2020

--

The best inheritance parents can give to their children is a few minutes of their time each day.

From: [John N Crockett](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:18:25 PM

Dear Sirs,

I send this email to ask your support and encourage you to vote the New River Gorge as a national park.

Thanks for your consideration,
John Crockett

John N Crockett

Outdoor24
288 Seik Road
Washington, PA 15301

Ph 724-228-2040
Mo 412-559-0024



From: [Bryan Dorshimer](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:07:51 PM

Good afternoon,

I hope that you are doing very well and having a nice day so far.

I am happy to express my support for this action and feel it is much deserved. I enjoyed many wonderful outdoor experiences with friends while attending WVU and after graduation continue to return frequently with my wife and two boys. There are too many great memories to go through and strongly support any initiative that would protect and preserve this national treasure for generations to come. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to help.

Take care and have a fabulous day.

Respectfully,

Bryan Dorshimer; CMCA, AMS

IMC Resort Services, Inc.

2 Corpus Christie, Suite 302

Hilton Head Island, SC 29928

843.785.4775 ext 108

Bryan@IMCHHI.com

www.IMCResortServices.com

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From: [Mike Dresch](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:21:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Michael Dresch and I live at 1216 Meadowbright Ln., Cincinnati, OH. 45230. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia and preserve a great piece of our natural landscape and features for future generations.

Sincerely,

Michael Dresch

February 25, 2020

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [jeannine dwyer](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 s 255nrg
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 12:19:21 PM

My name is jeannine dwyer
6185 paint creek rd
Scarbro, wv 25917

I do not support the bill to make the new river gorge a national park and preserve. The area can not support increased traffic. Parking will be an issue. Maintenance on trails is already an issue as they are poorly maintained. Restrictions on hunting affect wildlife and trees. Charging fees for private river use and entrance fees into the area will greatly affect locals who use this area every day.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Damon L. Ellis](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 10:48:31 AM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

Dear Committee –

I am a life long West Virginian. I am writing in support of designating the New River Gorge as a National Park. This designation will allow the beautiful and one of a kind NRG area to be protected and it will increase tourism to our great State.

Thank you for your commitment to the NRG and West Virginia.

Damon L. Ellis, Esquire
Mani Ellis & Layne, PLLC
602 Virginia Street E., Suite 200
PO Box 1266
Charleston, WV 25325-1266
(304) 720-1000 Telephone
(304) 720-1001 Facsimile
dlellis@mel-law.com
www.mel-law.com
Licensed in WV and OH



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From: [Lindsay Fairman](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge National Park
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 4:13:25 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Lindsay Fairman and I live at 413 Pantops Parade Port Matilda, PA 16870. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Lindsay Fairman

2/26/2020

From: [Frank Fallin](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Designating the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 12:07:54 PM

Dear US Senators,

Our names are Frank and Pamela Fallin and we live at 46 Castle Pine Lane in South Charleston, WV 25309. I am writing to show my fervent support for S.2555 National Park and Preserve. This is one of our favorite areas to visit for hiking and other recreation in our home state. Our son is an avid white water kayaker that now lives in Spartanburg, SC. His favorite place to kayak is on the Upper New and Lower Gauley Rivers. Please consider making this area into a National Park and Preserve. Keeping this area in its natural state is to the best interest of WV and its residents. Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely

Frank and Pamela Fallin

March 2, 2020

From: [Karen Feeley](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 7:52:14 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of making the New River Gorge in WV a National Park. That area is a truly beautiful piece of the American landscape that deserves to be preserved. It also has some of the best white water rafting in the world.

Please make it a national park and preserve our great nature.

Sincerely

Karen Feeley
1515 S Arlington Ridge Rd #104
Arlington, VA 22202

From: [Alice Fleischman](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Support for S. 2555 Nat'l Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 4:15:40 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Alice Fleischman and I live at 26444 George Washington Hwy, Aurora, WV. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Alice Fleischman

Date

Alice Fleischman
alice@eastwestprinting.com

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From: [Cheryl Rowland](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 10:17:23 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I understand there is much discussion about making the New River Gorge in West Virginia a National Park. I, too, would like to see this happen. It is a beautiful area that should be preserved and protected from the folks who some day may want to bring mining for coal or other minerals into this majestic area. We have visited this area and I can assure you that it should be protected for future generations.

Sincerely,
Cheryl C. Floyd
743 Skycoe Dr.
Salem, VA 24153

From: [Jennifer Floyd](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, March 5, 2020 9:51:25 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jennifer Floyd and I live at 1212 Greenmont Cir, Vienna, WV. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Floyd

March 5, 2020

From: [Patricia Force](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 5:14:48 PM

Dear Senators:

My husband and I spent time in the New River Gorge last August after several years absence. We marveled at the diversity and beauty of the area. We very much support preserving the New River Gorge by making it a National Park, **S. 2555 National Park and Preserve**. The Gorge truly is a national treasure and should be included as such. The new status would also provide badly needed support for WV, hopefully encouraging the tourist industry as we migrate from a coal focused economy.

Regards,
Patricia Force
11 Pinnacle Dr
Charleston WV 25311

From: ronforren@suddenlink.net
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:12:50 AM

Dear Senators,

Our names are Judith and Ronald Forren and we live at 2027 7th Avenue, St. Albans, WV 25177. We are writing to show our support for S.2555 National Park and Preserve. We believe that this legislation will help our area, region and the great state of West Virginia. Thank you for your consideration.

Judith and Ronald Forren

From: [Allen Foster](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Reserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:43:20 AM

Dear Senators,

Please co-sponsor and vote for this bill. The New River - despite its name - is actually the oldest river in North America, it is a unique and beautiful place that deserves protection from destructive activities. It is a place everyone should be able to experience, now and in the future.

Thank you for protecting this amazing geological treasure.

Best Regards,

Allen Foster
625 Shrader St Apt 8
San Francisco CA 94117

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Leah Fraleigh](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:26:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Leah Fraleigh and I live at 451 W Wrightwood Ave, Apt 1201, in Chicago, IL 60614. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Leah Fraleigh
Date: 2-25-2020
Email: lfraleigh@uwalumni.com
Phone: 262-444-2820

From: [Bob G.](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 12:06:20 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Bob Gabel and I live at 4640 Monroe Concord Rd. Troy, Ohio 45373. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

From: jeff.gabel@teamdetroitvolleyball.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge National Park Initiative
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 12:22:52 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jeff Gabel and I live at 8114 Chilson Road, Pinckney, MI 48169. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. I travel often to the New River Gorge area and strongly support preserving this natural wonderland for future generations.

Sincerely,

Jeff Gabel
2/26/2020

Jeff Gabel
Team Detroit Volleyball
(810) 224-0208
www.teamdetroitvolleyball.com

From: [Jeannine Garton](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 1:31:33 PM

Dear Senators,

The potential we have with S. 2555 National Park & Preserve is just wonderful.

This would be a GREAT boost to all of West Virginia as well as the nation.

Thank you for your service, Jeannine Garton
212 E First St, Weston WV 26452.

I work at Hacker's Creek Pioneer Descendant Library,
Horner, WV, as a genealogist helping folks from all over the USA!

From: [Mary Garvin](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:36:31 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Mary Garvin and I live at 652 Marion Court Huntington, WV 25703. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Mary Garvin

3/2/2020

From: [Gerencer, Thomas](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 12:56:19 PM

Hello,

Will people still be allowed to walk their dogs on a leash on the park trails? This is a huge concern for area residents that I didn't hear voiced at the hearing.

I'm Tom Gerencer, resident of Fayetteville.

I'm not a hunter. I'm a journalist. I'm as far from a hunter as you can get.

In fact I was shot at on a trail a mile from Fayetteville. A guy took a sound shot at me through a rhododendron thicket.

I'd actually like to see hunting limited near heavily used trails

Surprisingly I carpooled to the hearing with 2 hunters who feel strongly the same way I do. They don't feel it's their land and they think hunting should be limited near busy areas.

We looked at the map together and it's great that you've worked so hard to allow hunting in most of the planned preserve.

But those hunters and lots of hunters in this area hunt on remote lands near the river where nobody hikes that would be banned from hunting under this plan. (One of them walks out his back door and onto park land to hunt in the evenings after work. That would end under this plan.)

You've said these areas are too remote to hunt. Untrue. This hunter spent six hours dragging a deer out of the woods there this year. He uses that land daily.

In the most obese state in the country we should encourage that.

I've heard there are lots of other places they can hunt. Untrue. When you get out of work and you've got an hour of daylight you hunt nearby or you don't hunt.

This is everyone's land - including people like me who don't hunt - but it's the hunters' land too. You're talking about changing their way of life.

Hunting is already declining. From an article I wrote for the Boston globe about Lyme disease, hunting bans in Massachusetts have caused massive deer

overpopulation and a 6000% increase in Lyme disease in 30 years.

Nobody could argue that we don't need an economic boost. That's already happening with most user groups in the park increasing and tourism increasing. A national park would help. But for our health, our neighbors, and our self respect, and as much as I'm not a hunter, we owe it to ourselves to respect and preserve the tradition of hunting in these areas as much as possible. It's not just recreation to them. It's a way to feed their families.

Thank you for the work you're doing and I know from listening to you all at the hearing that you'll do the right thing.

I was encouraged to hear that you're going to inquire about allowing bowhunting. I think you should at the very least consider shrinking the proposed park boundary so it's tighter around existing hiking trails, trail heads, and other heavily trafficked areas.

Best regards,

Tom

Tom Gerencer
Gerencer Creative, Inc.
207-713-4136
tgerencer@yahoo.com

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From: [Zachary Scot Gilbert](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 6:17:44 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Zac Gilbert and I live at 8951 West Ridge Road, Unit D, Elyria, Ohio 44035. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

I am not a resident of West Virginia so I do not know if you will take my opinions seriously but I hope you do. I visited the New River Gorge in August 2018 and it was by far the most fun I've had in a long time. The sites and scenery are beyond beautiful and truly captures what a national park should be. I haven't traveled the entire state of West Virginia, like I wish to, but I can not imagine the New River Gorge being replicated anywhere else. The combination of history and beauty should make the New River Gorge an automatic National Park and I can't believe it is already not one.

Please do the right thing.

Sincerely,

Zac Gilbert

02/25/2020

From: [Earl Roy Gilpin](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: RE: 2-22-2020 S 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 2:41:15 PM

My Name is MSgt Earl Roy Gilpin, USMC Retired, residing at 1419 East Maple Avenue, Burton, Michigan 48529. I have been visiting the New River Gorge almost every year since I discovered it in 1982. It is some of the most breathtaking country I have seen and believe me I have seen a few touring with the Marines. I actually was stunned to find out it wasn't already a National park, what are you waiting for, let's make this happen so that I may take my great grandkids to enjoy this spectacular country, thank you for taking the time to read this, respectfully submitted.....over and out ERG

From: [Leslie Goings](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 1:08:19 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Leslie Goings and I live at 1659 13th Ave, Huntington, WV 25701. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

**Sincerely,
Leslie Goings
2/26/2020**

From: [Max Gonano](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge for National Park
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 2:55:44 PM

Senators,

I write to you asking you to please make The New River Gorge America's next national park. Easily America's best idea (Ken Burns said it best), national parks are incredibly important to this country because of the preservation of natural beauty for future generations. I have been to the area several times for outdoor recreation and it is truly an amazing place and absolutely worthy of national park distinction. I am confident that if you visited this area you would feel the same.

Best,
Max Gonano
3000 Clarke Dr.
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Kgoodwillie](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 4:50:20 PM

February 27, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I have loved and visited the New River and surrounding West Virginia parks and services since the 1970s.

It is a national treasure and should be given all protection and funding possible.

Please add my name to those who support action to create the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve.

Kay Goodwillie
1888 Ashland Avenue Apt A
Columbus, OH 43212

kgoodwillie@aol.com

From: [mike graham](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Fw: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve".
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:09:43 PM

-
Dear US Senators,

My name is __Aaron graham_ and I live at _____517 Buckeye Circle munroe falls,Ohio 44262____. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Name
Aaron Graham
Date
2/25/2020

From: [mike graham](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve".
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:07:27 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is _____Michael graham_ and I live at _____517 Buckeye Circle munroe falls,Ohio 44262_____. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Name
Michael Graham
Date
2/25/2020

From: [mike graham](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Fw: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve".
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:08:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is _____ Pamela graham_ and I live at _____ 517 Buckeye Circle munroe falls, Ohio 44262 _____. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Name
Pamela Graham
Date
2/25/2020

From: [raeh_15](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 11:08:26 AM

I love the New River Gorge National River and want to let you know that I fully support redesignating this great resource as a national park. I am from NC and visit WV twice a year specifically to go white water rafting. I feel that this would create jobs and improve the local economy, plus you would be helping preserve one of the most beautiful natural areas in our country.

Heather Hager
6921 A Glendower Rd
Raleigh, NC 27613
"Your limitations are only your imagination"

From: courtney@courtneymautz.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 7:38:56 AM

New River Gorge is an amazing national treasure and I would like to see it set aside so generations to come can enjoy it as our founding fathers were able.

I take my children every year to raft and camp in the area and they love it as I do.

Please support including it in our National Park system. Thanks!

Regards,
Courtney Hamel
15146 La Jolla Ct
Haymarket, VA 20169
703-728-6590

From: [Chris Hayes](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 5:00:25 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Christopher Hayes and I live at 101 W. Maple Avenue in Fayetteville, WV. As a member of the community that will be affected the greatest by the passing of this bill I am writing to show my full support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will only help the area, region and state of West Virginia, but will also serve to protect the natural beauty and preserve the historical importance of this truly "hidden gem" of the United States of America.

Sincerely,
Christopher Ian Hayes

From: [Andy Heint](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 2:29:31 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

Myself, My friends, My family have all been enjoying the wonders of West Virginia and the Gauley for the past 15 years. We enjoy its pristine rivers, forests and beautiful scenery. Preserving this landscape and designating it a National Park is a no brainer. Anyone who would think this is a bad thing needs to travel there and see what beauty this landscape beholds themselves. If designating this Godly place a National Park preserves it for future Generations and helps the state of W.V. then it should be done. I am not even from W.V. but nearby Ohio and I think this is a great idea.

Get this right!

Andy Heint
V.P. Digital Print
Presto Labels
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toll free (800) 201-7120 | cell (937) 902-5838
fax (937) 667-5687



From: [Herderick, Edward](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:37:50 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Ed Herderick and I live at 3791 Shallow Creek Dr. in Powell OH 43065. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

**Sincerely,
Ed Herderick
2/25/2020**

Edward D. Herderick, PhD
Director
Additive Manufacturing
College of Engineering CDME
The Ohio State University
1314 Kinnear Rd, Columbus, OH 43212
614-638-8254 Mobile
614-292-1077 Desk
herderick.2@osu.edu
cdme.osu.edu

From: [Tom Heywood](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve -- I Am FOR the Bill, and the National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:49:43 PM

Dear Senators,

I write to express my support **for** S. 2555, and **for** the creation of a new National Park and Preserve in the New River Gorge.

My name is Tom Heywood. My wife and I built a second home/retirement home on the New River Gorge (in Lansing, West Virginia) about six years ago, and we enjoy our home and on the Gorge about 100 days a year or more. As a part-time resident of the Gorge, an outdoor enthusiast, and someone who is excited about the future of West Virginia and the role that tourism and outdoor recreation will play in that future, I am a very enthusiastic supporter of S. 2555. I believe the creation of a National Park and Preserve on the New River Gorge will create huge and lasting benefits for the local community, the region, West Virginia and our nation.

Sincerely,
 Tom Heywood
 February 25, 2020

Thomas A. Heywood
 Bowles Rice LLP
theywood@bowlesrice.com
 600 Quarrier Street | Charleston, WV 25301
 Tel: (304) 347-1702 | Fax: (304) 343-3058
[Bio](#) | [vCard](#)



CONFIDENTIAL AND PRIVILEGED: This e-mail is confidential and privileged, and intended only for the review and use of the addressee(s). If you have received this e-mail in error, please notify the sender at (304) 347-1702 or by e-mail at theywood@bowlesrice.com. Thank you.

From: [Jaymes W. Hill](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S.2555 NRG National Park Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 1:39:25 PM

Dear US Senators,
My name is Jay Hill and I live at:

2465 Middlesex Rd
Columbus, OH 43220

I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.
Sincerely,

Jay Hill
2/26/2020

From: [Matt Holliday](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 8:49:25 AM

I strongly believe the New River Gorge in southern West Virginia deserves recognition as a National Park & Preserve. I have been able to travel the country and have been able to visit over half of the country's National Parks, with the current goal of visiting every National Park as soon as possible. When comparing the New River Gorge to all of the National Parks I have visited, I firmly believe the New River Gorge is one of the most beautiful and unique places in the entire country. It is completely deserving to be designated as a National Park & Preserve. The New River Gorge offers world class hiking, whitewater rafting, rock climbing and rappelling, ziplining, kayaking and Stand Up Paddleboarding, a truly unique BridgeWalk catwalk tour of the famous New River Gorge Bridge, mountain biking, fishing, and much more combined with rich history and culture. There is something very special about the New River Gorge that you can only experience by visiting. The people in the area are some of the nicest people in the world, and make the experience even more special. There are fantastic small towns in the area offering amazing dining, shopping, and other experiences. Bridge day is a WORLD CLASS festival that everybody should experience at least once in their lifetime. Grandview is a very beautiful area with gorgeous hikes and an excellent Theater WV Outdoor Drama production. Thurmond and Kaymoor are very special and unique destinations, rich in history. There is so much else to do in the immediate area: Babcock and Hawks Nest state parks are stunning, Summersville Lake is known as the "Little Bahamas of the East", and the Summit Bechtel Reserve is home to the national and world Scout Jamborees, and the Spartan obstacle course races and Spartan U.S. National Championship series. The New River Gorge is already amazing but has so much potential to become even more amazing. There is already a proposed bike trail that is in the works that would connect the town of Fayetteville all the way to the town of Beckley, making the New River Gorge a biking destination. I have hiked and explored the area thoroughly and have some great ideas for new trails. I would be glad to volunteer and help in any way possible. I am very passionate about the New River Gorge and believe it should be designated as a National Park and Preserve in the United States of America. It would be a wonderful addition for our country. Most people I have met across the country believe the western part of the United States has way more and much better National Parks than the eastern part of our country. I believe the New River Gorge would be an important addition to the National Parks in the eastern part of our country. This designation would be imperative to our economy and to our state of West Virginia. It would put West Virginia on the map and finally give our beautiful state the recognition it deserves. Any state that is known as "Almost Heaven" is surely deserving of a National Park.

Matt Holliday
625 Central Ave.
Oak Hill, WV 25901

From: [Holmes, Becky - holmesrf](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 3:07:56 PM

To whom it may concern:

I believe that the New River Gorge is a remarkable landscape that deserves the same protection, support and recognition as other natural landmarks like Yosemite Valley or Yellowstone National Park. Please consider this legislation.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Holmes
673 Wyndham Woods Circle
Harrisonburg, VA 22801
holmesrf@jmu.edu

From: [Stephanie Hopkins](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, March 5, 2020 9:11:24 AM

Good morning,

I would like to state my support toward making New River Gorge a National Park and preserve. This region is among the prettiest natural attractions in the state. It brings in millions and millions in revenue thanks to tourists who admire its beauty. We must conserve this beauty for generations to come, and the best way to do so is to designate it as a National Park. I love New River Gorge, as I'm sure you do too; so show a little love for the Mountain State and help protect its natural wonders!

-Stephanie Hopkins
501 Jamescrest Dr.
Beckley, WV 25801

From: [Hollie Hubbert](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Cc: [Hollie Hubbert](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Friday, March 6, 2020 3:58:26 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Hollie Hubbert and I live at 1577 Lee Street East, Charleston, WV 25311. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. My son, Thomas Bailey and I love visiting National Parks. He recently became a "Junior Park Ranger" at Glacier National Park. We are trying to visit at least one new National Park a year. Of course this is in addition to the state parks and forests we visit in West Virginia. Recently he asked why we have not visited a National Park in West Virginia and I explained it is because we do not have a National Park in our home state. I think it is important for our state for many reasons including the increased visitors and protection of this wonderful area. Specifically, for my son, I want him to be able to identify West Virginia's National Park with pride as we travel to all the other beautiful places in our state and travel around the US and the world.

Sincerely,
Hollie

From: [Brian Kanhofer](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 5:56:46 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Brian Kanhofer and I live at 17 West Lee St, Baltimore, Md 21201. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Brian Kanhofer

2/27/20

From: [Jennifer Keller](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:22:50 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jennifer Keller and I live at 7112 Forrester Ln., Indianapolis, Indiana. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I am an avid supporter of our national parks and protected lands. Each summer, I plan a trip to a different area of the country in order to visit national parks. The benefit these parks and protected lands offer to our country and its citizens is unparalleled. With the rise of urban development, it is essential we protect these national treasures for the enjoyment of future generations before it is too late. I believe the designation of this park will not only benefit the state of West Virginia, but the entire country. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Keller

From: [newrivergorgecabins](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 02/22/20 S. 2555 NRG National Park & Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:40:19 PM

Good Day,

My wife & I own & operate New River Gorge Cabins in Lansing, WV.

We fully support your involvement in this effort to have the Gorge area designated as a National Park.

We feel that this would open up a lot of opportunities in this tourism area.

Thank you for your help.

Gary & Chasity Kelly
New River Gorge Cabins

[Sent from Frontier Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: magneskcpa@aol.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 HRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 2:51:03 PM

My name is Mary Agnes Kern and I live at 109 Hayes Avenue Charleston WV 25314. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and the State of West Virginia.

Mary Agnes Kern CPA
304-344-0385
304-549-5755

From: [Mathias King](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:27:43 AM

To all concerned,

I'm encouraged to hear the news that the New River Gorge is being considered to become a National Park & Preserve. My family and I have traveled to the New River Gorge numerous times for hiking, white water rafting, zip lining, camping, etc. It's such a beautiful area and having a National Park designation can help protect the area and keep it in it's current state. I hope to take my grand kids here someday and I can only dream that they'll be able to experience what I have if this area can be protected in meantime and into the future.

Thanks,
Mathias Noble King
113 S Huntington St, Medina, OH 44256

From: [Brenda Kissko](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 9:49:32 PM

Brenda Kissko
6811 East Main Street #2024
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

March 4, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing you as a former resident of West Virginia, someone who moved to the Mountain State late in life and immediately realized the lure of its breathtaking countryside. As someone who has traveled to nearly 40 of our states, I can say with confidence West Virginia is one of the most beautiful states in the country. And I found its people quite welcoming. Our family came and visited us from Texas while we lived there, and we went white water rafting in The New River—an experience we'll always cherish. My husband and I often drove out to The New River Gorge Bridge and are already making plans to come back for Bridge Day!

I am writing you today in support of the designation of The New River Gorge as a National Park. This is a national treasure and needs to be preserved and promoted as such. I believe tourism is one of the best opportunities for West Virginia to diversify its economy.

Sincerely,

Brenda Kissko

From: [TGKnabenshue](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 4:35:30 PM

To the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

Please designate the New River Gorge a national park. The area is a gem on the east coast, and I believe all Americans, and particularly east coast travelers, deserve to know one of my favorite places in the world. West Virginians are gracious and welcoming hosts and would love to share our brand of wild and wonderful with the rest of the world.

Sincerely,

Traci Knabenshue
Resident of Monongalia County, WV
19 Cherry Hill Rd.
Morgantown, WV 26508

--

Think before you print. :)

From: [Grace Kneller](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-26-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 1:53:50 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Grace Kneller and I live at 812 W Gilbert Rd, Palatine, IL 60067. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. I personally have visited the New River Gorge and it has a very special place in my heart.

Sincerely,

Grace Kneller
Wednesday, February 26, 2020

From: [Steven Knoble](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge For National Park Status.
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 6:01:26 PM

To whom it may concern,
Please consider the New River Gorge area for National Park Status. It is a unique and beautiful area of West Virginia, and it is important to preserve this area from development or mining activities. The tourism dollar could bring in a consistent and needed boost to the areas economy. I regularly travel on motorcycle to the area from Cleveland Ohio .

Thank you for your time.

--
Steven Knoble
(440) 315-3620
Sknoble13@gmail.com

From: [Sachi Kobayashi](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#); info@onthegorge.com
Subject: Make New Rive Gorge a National Park!!!
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 10:39:46 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Sachi Kobayashi and I live Philadelphia. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Though I've never lived in the Wild and Wonderful Mountain State, I grew up rafting the New and Gauley Rivers, and still make a point to go at least once a year. It's a truly special place with truly special people that deserves to be protected and stewarded. I've traveled all 50 states, and been to 40 national parks, but the New River Gorge remains one of the most stunning things I've ever seen.

My aunt lives in West Virginia, and worked as a school counselor for awhile. Based on her experiences, I believe the state deserves more. While the WV is rich in beauty, culture, natural resources, and resilient people, it is under appreciated and under invested in. Making the New River Gorge a National Park will go a long way to elevate the Mountain State to the level of cherished recognition and visionary investment that it so richly deserves.

Sincerely,

**Sachi Christine Kobayashi
302-419-8240**

From: [Darlene](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 7:43:50 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Darlene Kossack and I live at 5 Dayton Street, Mt Jewett, PA. I am writing to show my support for

S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Darlene Kossack
2/26/2000

From: [Kenneth Kreger](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Fw: New River Gorge Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 4:12:26 PM

2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve.

Dear US Senators,

My name is ____Kenneth Kreger____ and I live at 448 Laurel Creek Rd, Fayetteville, WV. 25840_____. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely

From: [Juliana Kreuscher](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:56:44 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Juliana Kreuscher and I live at 836 Patrick Henry Dr. Blacksburg, VA. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

--

Juliana Kreuscher
Industrial and Systems Engineering
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Class of 2020
2/25/2020

From: [alankuhlman1950](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-20 S2555 NRG
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 6:32:31 PM

My family strongly support the passage of this bill changing the designation of the New River Gorge to National Park and Preserve status. Our family has been visiting National Parks since 1973. These parks are the jewels of the states fortunate to have them within their boundaries. The change in status would most definitely increase tourism, supporting many locally owned small businesses and increase state tax revenues. This change in designation would shine a bright, positive light on our state. I ask all members of WV Congressional delegation to be strong advocates for passage of this bill.

Alan and Carol Kuhlman
4 Granville Drive
Elkview WV 25071

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy smartphone.

From: [Deb Lamey](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 4:23:42 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Deborah Lamey and I live at 708 Northwestern Avenue, Beckley, WV 25801. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia. I attended the 2-22-20 hearing, and I am strongly in support of this bill. Thank you for your continued hard work on this matter!

Sincerely,

Deborah K. Lamey

2/24/20

--

"In wisdom gathered over time I have found that every experience is a form of exploration." — Ansel Adams

From: [Larry Larsen](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:08:19 PM

To US Senators,

I am Larry Larsen, a long-time outdoors/travel writer and photographer. I currently live in Ocala, Florida at 6594 SW 94th Circle, Zip: 34481. I have frequently visited the mountains and rivers in the New River Gorge area of West Virginia and am writing to show my full support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe that transforming the beautiful New River Gorge into the country's next national park will help the area, region and state of West Virginia as well as bring appropriate attention so that travelers around the country can discover this "Gem".

Sincerely,

Larry D. Larsen
email: larry@larsenoutdoors.com
phone: 863-398-9985 (cell)

February 25, 2020

From: [Clovis Lawless](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:17:43 AM

I support the bill.

Clovis Lawless
103 Upton Way
Daniels WV 25823

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Rachel Leier](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:03:25 PM

Dear US Senators:

My name is Rachel Leier and I live at 1227 Acquedotto, New Braunfels, Texas 78132. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia, which is one of the most underrated and beautiful states in the country. I grew up visiting West Virginia from Ohio. I have rafted on the New River and stayed in the New River Gorge area multiple times over the years. I traveled to New River Gorge from Texas with my family last year just to raft the river because I have yet to find anything that rivals it outside of WV. I hope you are fortunate enough to visit and experience it someday.

Thank you,

Rachel Leier
February 25, 2020

From: [chad lewis](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 3:29:30 PM

West Virginia deserves to have a National Park that the New River Gorge can provide. I have taken many friends to the area for white water rafting, and their thoughts were always the same: this place is amazing. The money that could help the area grow as well as protect a special place would provide so many jobs.

Chad Lewis
10432 Cozy Ln, Ashland, VA 23005

From: [Brandie Lively](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:40:48 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Brandie Lively and I live at 465 Hunters Ridge Rd, Fayetteville WV. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

**Sincerely,
Brandie Lively
02/25/2020**

From: Brandie Lively
To: fortherecord (Energy)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:39:25 AM

Please make the New River Gorge area a National Park and Preserve. It will be a great boon to our economic base if this designation would occur.

--

**Brandie Lively
465 Hunters Ridge Rd, Fayetteville, WV 25840**

From: [Carlie Manges](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Enerov\)](#)
Subject: 2-20-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Reserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 5:21:31 PM

To Whom This May Concern:

I would like to express my support for the proposed designation to include the New River Gorge as a National Park.

This is a beautiful stretch of land that deserves to be protected. National Parks preserve heritage, it saves a piece of history that created the stories the land has had. Having the NRG as a National Park is going to bring more people to West Virginia, the Wild and Wonderful, to explore, create, enjoy, adventure-all of which that future generations deserve the right to see.

Not only is it valuable to preserve the land and animals, it is going to greatly benefit the economic growth of the regional communities. Nature based tourism in the United States brings in nearly \$30 billion in economic activity and has provided over 250,000 private sector jobs (2015). Annually, the National Parks Service employs over 21,000 jobs. West Virginia is in need of this kind of support that the community needs.

This area is already so loved by Americans across the country-the only thing fit is to do is to have the NRG become the New River Gorge National Park and Reserve.

Carlie Manges
1 Concho Road
Oak Hill, WV 25901

From: [Jon R. Mani](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 10:32:55 AM

My name is Jonathan "Jon" Mani. I am a lifelong resident of West Virginia. I am a father, husband, outdoorsman, community member and business man.

I ask that you designate the New River Gorge as a National Park.

The designation of the area as a National Park will further assist in promoting tourism in the area and open resources to protect the gorge.

Please vote YES to designate the NRG as a National Park.

Jonathan R. Mani, Esq.

Mani, Ellis & Layne, PLLC
602 Virginia Street, East, Suite 200
Charleston, WV 25301
(304) 720-1000
Facsimile: (304) 720-1001
www.mel-law.com
jrmani@mel-law.com

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From: [Woody Martin](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 1:05:52 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Don Martin and we've lived at 1493 Bush Run Rd., French Creek, WV 26218 for more than 30 years.

We love the New River Gorge and Gauley River areas, and are writing to show our support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve.

We believe this will help this jewel of a national resource and recreation area, to be shared with generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Donald W. Martin, II
February 27, 2020

From: [Aubrey Masino](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. NRG National Park and Reserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:03:50 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Aubrey Masino and I live at 2315 Crosslanes Way, Odenton, MD 21113. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Aubrey Masino

2/25/2020

From: tmazar@comcast.net
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 4:05:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Timothy Mazar and I live at 613 Yellowbrick Rd. Brick New Jersey. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Tim Mazar

February 25, 2020

200

From: [Sarah McCann](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: The subject line should be "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 8:13:44 AM

My name is Sarah McCann and I live at 3322 Salem Cove TRL SE Conyers, Ga 30013. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Sarah McCann

2/26/2020

201

From: [Justin D. McCarthy](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:22:31 AM

MY name is Justin D. McCarthy and I live at 176 Deer View Court, Fayetteville WV 25840.
I am wring in support of S. 2555 to designate the New River Gorge National River as a National Park and Preserve.
J.D. McCarthy

--

Justin D. McCarthy
176 Deer View Court
Fayetteville, WV 25840
(304) 574-6469

202

From: [Ed McComas](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S.2555 New River Gorge National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:40:19 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Charles Edward McComas and I live at 410 Peregrine Ridge Road, Victor, WV 25938. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [MaryAnn McGowan](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Senate Hearing S.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2020 3:37:37 PM

My name is MaryAnn McGowan and I live at 28335 Midland Trail in Hico, WV 25854. My mailing address is PO Box 332 in Hico.

I fully support the NRG National River be made into a National Park and Preserve and believe it will bring added economic growth to the area.

I have worked in the tourism business in this state since 1981 and have watched all the ups and downs. Name recognition alone will be a benefit and (I believe) bring added tourism to our area.

Thank you for your time,

MaryAnn McGowan
304-640-7359

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Amy McLaughlin](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 9:03:57 AM

To Whom it May Concern:

I am in support of the proposed change of designation for the New River Gorge.

The New River Gorge is beautiful, unique and holds within it the natural history of this part of the world and the cultural history of coal mining in West Virginia. It deserves to be protected, promoted and appreciated on an international scale, and I believe – and data shows – that National Park status will accomplish all three of these goals.

Many families, including my own, will benefit from the new designation as a National Park. I make my living offering lodging to guests visiting the New River Gorge for recreation, cultural/historical exploration and adventure activities like rock climbing and whitewater rafting.

In 2013, my husband and I invested in a large historic building in downtown Fayetteville and poured our money and resources into restoring it to accommodate visitors to our beloved home state. Business has improved year after year, but **designation as a National Park will markedly increase our occupancy allowing us to reinvest in our building, hire and contract more people for goods and services, and provide additional tax revenue to the town and state.**

I believe National Park designation will have a greater impact on our economy than any tourism marketing campaign ever could. It will put West Virginia on the world-wide stage in perpetuity, labeling it a premier destination and giving it a well-respected stamp of approval.

It is my understanding that hunting organizations are opposed to the changed designation because the plan - with its increased park size - includes a small re-designation of land currently available for their use. But as is known through the nation and state, and reported by the WV Division of Natural Resources, **participation in hunting has drastically declined over the past decade. Conversely, tourism in WV has shown an increase. It makes sense to re-designate a small portion of hunting land to recreation for the greater good of our economy.**

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Amy McLaughlin

5310 Noyes Ave.
 Charleston, WV 25301
 304-382-6234

[Lafayette Flats](#) Boutique Vacation Rentals
 Fayetteville, WV

From: emcminn@suddenlink.net
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Comment on S 2555
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:25:51 PM

Written statement concerning S 2555
New River Gorge National Park and Preserve

Committee Members:

I had the opportunity to speak at the hearing held in Beckley, WV concerning S2555; however, the two minutes allotted was not much time to address all of my concerns.

As mentioned in my opening remarks, I believe the legislation intentions are good; however, I am opposed to the current boundaries and loss of nearly 5,000 acres of public hunting land that is currently open. I strongly believe the boundaries should be reduced to the absolute minimum necessary around the historic areas and locations with the most interest for pedestrian visitors. This would also lower the impact on National Park Service employees maintaining such a vast area allowing finite resources to be spent on infrastructure where most needed.

Additionally, I believe the legislation should be written in such a way to guarantee the land available for hunting would be actively managed for the benefit of wildlife. It is my understanding the National Park Service generally takes a "hands-off" approach to making habitat improvements that would benefit wildlife. If the National Park and Preserve is to meet its fullest potential with attracting visitors, having a vibrant ecosystem which will benefit non-game and big game species would go a long way in accomplishing those goals as wildlife viewing is often a major attraction for visitors.

Please continue to work on adjustments to the boundaries to limit as much as possible the loss of access to public hunting land and ensure the land that remains can be actively managed with the use of selective clearings, controlled burns, avoidance of pesticides and other wildlife management/habitat improvement techniques.

Thank you,
Ed McMinn
WV Native Resident
304-993-2978

My first experience in the New River Gorge dates back to March of 1976 when I trained to be a whitewater raft guide. That was pre-Bridge, pre-National River designation and pre-four-lane highway – making me somewhat prehistoric.

Over the years my employment career has included whitewater outfitters, fishing companies, the State of WV, Winterplace Ski Area, Raleigh County Board of Education, WVU, Marshall University and now the Summit Bechtel Scout Reserve.

Southern West Virginia is currently engaged in the process of re-invention. This re-invention includes many layers – all of which are supporting strands.

Coal, natural gas and timber will continue to be important for our economy.

Tourism growth over the last few decades has proven vital to our region. This includes: climbing, biking, hunting, ATV trails, camping, zip lines, whitewater, hiking, Bridge Day and more. The impact is even greater when the total includes the food, amenities and accommodations for these thousands of guests.

The New River National River and Gauley River National Recreation areas are both cornerstones and gems for our community. Much of our economic growth can be directly attributed to receiving these National designations.

After an extensive search, the Boy Scouts of America selected Southern WV to be the home for The Summit - only one of four high adventure camps in the entire United States. Even more proof of our unique natural beauty and outdoor opportunities.

Recently, WVU Institute of Technology relocated to uptown Beckley – a huge educational opportunity for our young people – right here in our hometown.

As we continue to build on this re-invention, Southern West Virginia is ready for the next layer. With the help of your committee we can polish our gem, the National River, by becoming an official National Park and Preserve. All of the components are already in place. The National Park and Preserve designation would increase recognition. This new status would serve to facilitate our sustainability and continued growth along with even greater opportunities for our future generations.

George McMurray
Piney View, WV
jorgemcmurray@gmail.com
304.252.3345
02/22/2020

From: [Todd McNeal](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 2:51:23 PM

Please consider making the New River Gorge a National Park.
This beautiful area needs to be protected and shared with the nation.
Please help get this completed.

Thanks,

James Todd McNeal
2040 Evanor Lane
Cincinnati, OH 45244

513-668-3599



Virus-free. www.avg.com

From: [Jill Meines](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:11:43 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jill Meines and I live in Grandville, Michigan. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. We have visited this place a few times and really love it there. We have recommended it to many people to check it out.

Sincerely,

**Jill Meines
4027 N. Osage Dr.
Grandville, MI 49418**

February 25, 2020

From: [Amy Millar](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 4:39:23 PM

Hello,

My name is Amy. I grew up going to national parks all across the country with my family. As a mother I now enjoying bringing my own children to as many as I can. I am an adventure seeker by nature and anyone that knows me knows my absolute favorite place, but it isn't a national park....yet. The new river gorge is 100% my favorite place to be. I only get there a few times a year as the drive is a solid 8 hours, but so worth it. The first time I found myself at the rivers edge I was there on a whim last minute decision to take a road trip alone and seeking out healing. I had just gotten out of an abusive relationship of 20 years, I was left broken, destitute, depressed and lost. I didn't even know who I was at that point. I needed to find myself really for the first time. I can still remember what it felt like the first time I sat at the rivers edge. It was a feeling of renewal, hope, and beginnings. I return every August to pay homage to my journey and try to squeeze extra trips too. I've brought my children and my new partner to the place I credit with my new beginning and we all now love and enjoy the gorge. I'm forever grateful to the new river and I urge you that it become a national park. The people all around the river and gorge are a part of the most incredible community and by making this a national park, we can ensure it's legacy continues, the local economy is supported and that more people like me can find what they seek at the rivers edge. So please make the New River Gorge a national park.

Thank you.

Amy Millar
268-939-5027

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From: [Jan Millard](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 8:17:20 PM

To whom it may concern:

For years my family has enjoyed summers rafting and exploring the area around the New River Gorge. We have enjoyed the beauty and power of the river and we are interested in preserving it for generations to come. We have explored the area by trail as well, enjoying the history of the mining town of Thurmond.

I wholeheartedly support making the New River Gorge into a National Park. This beautiful, exciting landscape should be protected and enjoyed by all Americans. Making it a National Park would showcase it and bring much needed commerce into the area, as well.

Thank you.

Jan Millard
11601 Kingswood Blvd.
Fredericksburg, VA 22408

Testimony of Congresswoman Carol D. Miller (WV-03)
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
Full Committee Field Hearing
February 22, 2020

It is an honor to submit this statement as the Representative from West Virginia's Third Congressional District, which encompasses the southern portion of the state, and is home to the New River Gorge. I consider myself lucky to represent such a beautiful area, which is rich in history and abundant in scenic views. I would like to thank the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for holding this important hearing, and to Senators Capito and Manchin for their work on preserving this area for years to come.

In October, I, along with Congressman Mooney and Congressman McKinley, introduced H.R. 4610, the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Designation Act. This bill is a companion to the legislation introduced in the Senate by Senators Capito and Manchin. Our legislation would designate the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve. This important designation would help promote the resources and historical significance that our state has to offer, while also establishing areas for hunting and fishing and other recreational activities. This legislation is not only a win for West Virginians, but for everyone who wants to come and visit our beautiful state.

I would like to thank everyone for their work on this important legislation. Senator Capito has worked tirelessly with stakeholders in our district to come to a consensus and has ensured that our entire delegation is included in this process. I would also like to thank all of the community leaders, business owners, and other stakeholders for attending this hearing. It is important that we provide the opportunity for feedback and clarify that this is a partnership process and to ensure that everyone has a seat at the table.

The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Designation Act is a great opportunity for West Virginia. I have lived in West Virginia for over 46 years, and I sincerely believe that our state's natural beauty is one of our greatest assets. Re-designating the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve will boost our tourism, grow our economy, and draw in more people from around the world. By preserving our land and growing our recreational industry, we can ensure that it is available and protected for future generations.

I am proud to partner with our delegation on this legislation and, together, I hope that we can continue to promote the wild and wonderful resources that our state has to offer and swiftly pass this legislation. Thank you again to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee for holding this important hearing.

From: [Mills, Mary](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve".
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 2:31:19 PM

Dear US Senators,

**My name is Mary Mills and I live at 636 Foxbury Ct. Apt C Columbus, OH 43228.
I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I
believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.**

Sincerely,

Mary Mills

2/25/20

From: [Brett Moder](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 2:34:45 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Brett Moder and I live at 6816 Monroe Avenue, West Mifflin, PA 15122. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. The area is absolutely beautiful and I hope it will always remain that way.

Sincerely,

Brett Moder

02/27/2020

From: [marilyn](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S.2555 NRG National Park and Reserve"
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:34:43 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Marilyn Montgomery and I live at 230 Jones Ave. in Oak Hill, WV. I am writing to show my support for S.2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely, Marilyn Montgomery
2-25-2020

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [Bill Moore](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:15:50 PM

I absolutely believe that the New River Gorge should be a National Park.

I live in California now, but was raised in West Virginia. Living in California, I see what a National Park can do for tourism and the economy of a particular area.

We could put West Virginia on the map. I mean this literally because when asked here in California where i'm from and I say West Virginia, people always say 'I have friends in.....', and its always a Virginia town. I have to explain that West Virginia is a completely different state.

So lets make this happen.

William Moore
1012 1/2 Larrabee Street
West Hollywood, CA 90069

From: [John C. Moyer](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 2:46:54 PM

Dear Friends,

If there's a chance to make New River Gorge a national park, consider this a positive endorsement. Not only does New River Gorge deserve to be protected for future generations, the state of West Virginia could use the added tourism dollars a park will generate.

Thanks for your time.

John Moyer
5216 Russell Ave
Pennsauken, NJ 08109

From: [scott mumma](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 4:57:28 PM

Dear US Senators,
My name is Scott Mumma and I live at 10217 Blackstock Rd. Huntersville, NC 28078. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.
Keep West Virginia Wild and Wonderful!
Sincerely,
Scott Mumma
February 28, 2020



Testimony on S. 2555
by
National Parks Conservation Association
Joy M. Oakes, Senior Director, Mid-Atlantic Region
Submitted to
the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Following the February 22, 2020 field hearing in Beckley WV
March 3, 2020
Via website: fortherecord@energy.senate.gov

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on S. 2555, "The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Designation Act." These comments are submitted on behalf of the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), the only national membership organization dedicated to advocacy on behalf of America's National Park System, and our more than 1.4 million members and supporters, of whom more than 7,100 are West Virginia residents and proud Mountaineers. NPCA hopes to support S. 2555, and my colleagues and I stand ready to continue to assist the sponsors and staff to address our concerns.

New River Gorge has national significance due to its remarkable history and culture, its rich biodiversity, its outstanding beauty and its diversity of recreational opportunities.

New River Gorge National River in southern West Virginia lies at the core of a globally significant forest. It is a place of outstanding beauty and nationally significant diversity of native plants and wildlife. According to the National Park Service (NPS), New River Gorge hosts the second-highest degree of biodiversity in the National Park System, exceeded only by that

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at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina and Tennessee. New River Gorge also showcases stories from human history, including our nation's industrial history of coal mining and railroading. The park's remarkable range of recreational opportunities include excellent rock climbing and bicycling, exciting whitewater boating, flat water paddling, hunting and fishing, hiking, and wildlife watching.

Just as New River Gorge's designation in 1978 as a "National River" reflected a compromise among stakeholder interests, S.2555 attempts to navigate conflicting stakeholder interests.

In 1978, when NPCA staff Destry Jarvis negotiated support for the legislative designation of the New River Gorge as a "National River" at the request of the late U.S. Senator Jennings Randolph, the "National River" designation was a compromise between advocates for a simpler "Wild and Scenic River" designation, and those who advocated for a "National Park" designation for West Virginia's New River Gorge.

NPCA's unwillingness in 1978 to support "National Park" designation derived from a combination of the continuing non-NPS management of commercial activities through the Gorge (a commercial railroad and commercial boating), the presence of extensive unrestored scars on the landscape from legacy coal mining, and the public's strong desire for public hunting access to this area. Local support for the "national river" designation reflected widespread support for greater land acquisition than designation under the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act would have allowed (an average of 320 acres per river mile). A designation of "National River" offered a singular public recognition for this nationally significant area and its natural and historic resource values.

The 1978 legislation agreed to leave management of commercial river outfitters to the State of West Virginia, judged at the time to be acceptable on a "National River" or a "Wild and Scenic River," but not in a "National Park." Similarly, S. 2555 aims to navigate among the desire for recognizing New River Gorge as a "National Park," and issues including hunting access that faced stakeholders more than 40 years ago and remain under debate.



Designating four discontinuous areas totaling fewer than 8,000 acres within the 72,000+-acre park as “National Park” and designating the remaining 64,000+ acres as a “Preserve” where public hunting may continue attempts to respond to hunters’ legitimate concerns for access to lands they now hunt -- but would result in one of the smallest “National Park” areas in the National Park System.

This legislation represents other compromises among competing stakeholder interests. For example, Glade Creek -- one of the wildest, least developed sub-watersheds in the National River, one of its most biodiverse landscapes and best wildlife habitat -- is proposed to be included in the Preserve and so would continue to be accessible for hunting. Due to its ecosystem values, Glade Creek would be suitable to be included instead in the National Park.

As the members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee consider this legislation, we ask you to consider the following questions:

1. How will re-designation of New River Gorge National River to New River Gorge National Park and Preserve change visitor expectations for their experience? Will the NPS have funding sufficient to provide a “National Park” experience? What management challenges can reasonably be anticipated because of the proposed National Park and Preserve’s patchwork character?

As a National Park System advocacy organization founded in 1919, we deeply understand the impacts of the “National Park” brand. We empathize with the desire by many to re-designate New River Gorge as a “National Park” as an expression of pride in and recognition of this nationally significant place.

The NPS staff here and across the country are mission-driven professionals dedicated to preserving resources and assisting visitors in having enjoyable, meaningful and inspiring experiences. However, park visitation here and across the country is increasing — while the NPS’s capacity to preserve resources and manage visitors is declining sharply.



Preserved areas in the National Park System provide both economic and quality-of-life benefits to neighboring communities. While economic benefits are not the reason National Park System units are designated, they are an important consequence that benefits the park's community neighbors.

Increased economic benefits are connected to the quality of a person's experience while visiting the park. As discussed below and outlined in Table 1, while visitation at New River Gorge is growing, staff capacity is declining sharply, annual operating dollars available to the NPS buy less than they did a decade ago, and the park has a \$21 million repair backlog. We are concerned about the NPS's ability to deliver the experience that "National Park" visitors expect.

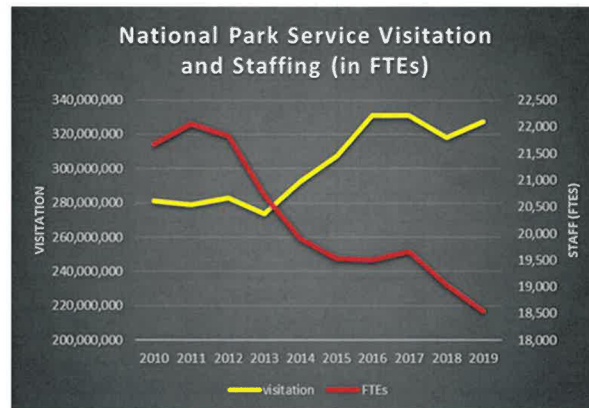
Put in practical terms, erosion of staff capacity at New River Gorge National River since FY10 essentially equates to losing one out of every four staff (full-time or equivalent). For every \$1.00 the Superintendent had in FY10 to preserve resources and manage visitors, in FY19 she had only 84 cents at most. The inflation-adjusted budget calculations shown in Table 1 do not account for fixed costs NPS budgets must absorb such as staff pay increases, increases in insurance rates and increased materials costs. Meanwhile visitation to New River Gorge has increased by 4%.

The harsh reality at New River Gorge reflects a system-wide trend in which visitation is rising while the NPS's capacity to preserve resources and manage visitation is declining sharply.



New River Gorge National River				
	Staffing	Visitation	Operations Budget	Repair Backlog
Staffing				
FY10	99 FTEs			
FY19	74 FTEs			
Change in FTE #s	-25			
% change, FTEs	-25%			
Visitation				
2010		1,151,213		
2019		1,195,721		
Change		+44,508		
% change		+ 4%		
Operations Budget				
FY10			\$7.674M	
FY10 in 2019 dollars			\$9.110M	
FY19			\$7.653M	
Change in real dollars			-\$1.457M	
% change in real dollars			-16%	
Repair Backlog				
As of 9/30/2018				\$21,079,428

Table 1 ©NPCA March 2020 using National Park Service data



Graph ©NPCA March 2020 using National Park Service data

Recognizing that the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee is not the Appropriations Committee – we are deeply concerned for the NPS’s ability to provide the high-quality “National Park” experience that visitors to a “National Park” expect at a time when its staff capacity and financial resources are shrinking, and have the following questions:

- a. What steps can members of this Committee and the state delegation take to ensure that the park’s base budget will be increased?
- b. What steps can members of this Committee and the state delegation take to ensure that the park receives funding to upgrade its internal infrastructure critical to providing a safe visitor experience?

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- c. What steps can members of this Committee and the state delegation take to provide Land & Water Conservation Fund dollars to enable the NPS to acquire in-holdings from willing sellers in order to allow it to manage resources and visitors more effectively and to National Park expectations? For reference, of the 72,185 acres within the park's designated boundary, the NPS owns 53,853 acres.
- d. We are deeply grateful that S. 2555's sponsors, U.S. Senators Joe Manchin and Shelley Moore Capito, also were early sponsors of S. 500, the "Restore Our Parks" bill to invest significantly in addressing the backlog of major repairs across the National Park System, currently totaling almost \$12 billion.
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/infrastructure/identifying-reporting-deferred-maintenance.htm>. We are grateful for the robust support for S. 500 by members of this Committee. Enacting S.500 is urgent and important for the future integrity, sustainability, and community economic benefits of the National Park System including at New River Gorge, whether it remains a National River or is re-designated as a National Park and Preserve.
- e. Will the NPS receive additional funds sufficient to address new costs related to re-designation including new signage?
- f. How can New River Gorge Park and Preserve capitalize on its unique assets and be the outstanding destination envisioned by the supporters of this legislation? For example, with the national decline of the coal mining industry, the NPS at New River Gorge has an opportunity unique in the National Park System to tell more robustly this part of America's industrial and human history. Rehabilitating, maintaining, and interpreting structures from the area's coal mining legacy would require additional financial investment in the park.



2. **Commercial activity in a “National Park” should be overseen by the National Park Service.**

We are concerned that continued oversight by the state of West Virginia of the commercial boating industry at New River Gorge could be used as a precedent to exempt future commercial activity in the new National Park and Preserve from NPS oversight. Should state oversight of the commercial boating industry at New River Gorge continue, might S. 2555 add language to clarify that this unusual situation is “grandfathered in” and should not be seen as the model for oversight of any future commercial activities in a National Park?

The NPS requires oversight of commercial activities in order to carry out its basic mission under the Organic Act, for example, the authority to institute carrying capacity limits to preserve high quality resources and experiences. For example, the NPS sets carrying capacity limits for boating on the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. At New River Gorge National River, the NPS has oversight of other commercial activities in the park, an appropriate and reasonable role consistent with the NPS’s duties under the Organic Act.

Meanwhile, since 1978 when the U.S. Congress established New River Gorge National River, the NPS has added and underwrites the costs of many amenities to support recreational boating. Requiring commercial outfitters to apply for a commercial use permit (for a modest fee, currently \$150 - \$300) generates only a small fraction of the funds NPS needs to support river access and safety. Those costs include laying gravel on dirt roads for buses and other vehicles to have river access, maintaining bathrooms and providing safety rangers. Presently the NPS provides three full-time plus one seasonal “river safety rangers” whose total annual costs exceed \$240,000.



3. What steps might both benefit park resources, and potentially help address concerns about hunting access?

We encourage the Committee to consider adding language to S. 2555 similar to language in Public Law 100-534 that established the Gauley River National Recreation Area, with appropriate changes to reflect the specific interests of a New River Gorge National Park and Preserve to preserve biodiversity, increase safety for recreational access and other matters to enhance the “National Park” as well as potentially to provide additional acreage where hunting would be appropriate and allowed. Provisions included in the Gauley River National Recreation Area enabling legislation but not in the New River Gorge National River enabling legislation read:

Title II, Section 201, (e)(3): “In addition, in order to provide reasonable public access and vehicle parking for public use and enjoyment of the recreation area, consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the natural and scenic values of the recreation area, the Secretary may, with the consent of the owner thereof, acquire such lands and interests in lands to construct such parking and related facilities at other appropriate locations outside the boundaries of, but within one mile of the recreation area as may be necessary and appropriate. Any such lands shall be managed in accordance with the management provisions for the recreation area as defined in subsection (a).”

Title II, Section 203, (a): “The Secretary may acquire lands or interests in lands within the boundaries of the recreation area by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange. When any tract of land is only partly within such boundaries, the Secretary may acquire all or any portion of the land outside of such boundaries in order to minimize the payment of severance costs.”

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the legislation as introduced. NPCA would very much like to support S. 2555, and my colleagues and I stand ready to continue to assist the sponsors and staff to address our concerns.

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From: [Tina Naylor](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:13:25 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Tina Naylor and I live at 1002 Elizabeth St. Oak Hill, WV 25901. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Tina M. Naylor
2/25/2020

From: sboldfield@aol.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: A simple request
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 4:31:28 PM

Please designate the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve.

Baird Oldfield, MD
308 Plantation View Lane
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

From: [Michael Paugh](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 10:52:19 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Michael A. Paugh and I live at 76 Clear Spring Dr. Morgantown, WV 26508. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. Please highly consider approving this bill for the people of West Virginia and the benefits it will have overall.

Sincerely,

**Michael A. Paugh
304-282-9680
mike_devildog@yahoo.com**

2/26/2020

From: mailmantony@suddenlink.net
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 4:38:44 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Tony Pearson and I live at 206 Hunter Street Oak Hill, WV 25901. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

**Tony Pearson
February 26, 2020**



From: [Terri Perry](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 4:39:26 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Terr Perry and I live at 1436 Washington Boulevard, Huntington, West Virginia 25701. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. The benefits of designating the region a national park would be experienced at many levels throughout the state, generating jobs, adding much-needed resources and fostering community pride. I have enjoyed this area of our state many times and would like to many more times to come. Please pass this initiative.

Sincerely,

Terri L. Perry
Resident of West Virginia

From: [Jonathan Phillips](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 4:24:41 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jonathan Phillips and I live at 110 Hickory Ct Daniels, WV 25832. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Phillips

2/24/20

From: tarterms@zoomtown.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 3:06:50 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Sandy Pittman and I live at 76 Ridge Ave. Cleves OH 45002. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. And I believe it will help preserve the area so that more people can enjoy it as I have.

Sincerely,

Sandy Pittman

Date 2/26/2020

From: [Lee Ann Quinn](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, March 5, 2020 6:33:57 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Lee Ann Quinn and I live at 607 Mohawk Street, Columbus OH . I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Lee Ann Quinn

March, 5 2020

Sent from my iPhone

235

From: rvrc@roadrunner.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 10:47:27 AM

New River Gorge National Park & Preserve!
Let's get this done!

Ron Ratcliff
1100WindyRidge Road
Chillicothe, Ohio 45601

From: [Kirk Redner](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve".
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 1:22:52 PM

Dear U.S. Senators,

I would like to lend my support to designating the New River Gorge a National Park & Reserve. My son and I had a great adventure river rafting there during Gaully River Days about 4 years ago and it was a great experience that I would like future generations to appreciate.

Thank you for your kind consideration in this matter,

Sincerely,

Kirk Redner,
10420 Cedar Pointe Dr.
White Lake, Mi 48386

February 25, 2020

From: [David Regan](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 2:38:24 PM

Greetings!

I am writing to express my support of making the New River Gorge in WV a national park! We travel twice annually from Charlotte, NC to visit both the New River Gorge and the Gauley River. Both are pristine examples of how when we take care of our natural resources and do the right thing no matter how hard that the rewards are the greatest. This area has traditionally benefited greatly from similar legislation and regulations and the reward has been a booming tourist industry that thrives because of the care that goes into preserving the beauty of this area. We express our full support to make the New River Gorge the next national park!

Best,

David Andrew Regan
7532 Swans Run Rd
803 Ruth Ave.
Kannapolis, NC 28083
(c) 980.395.4510
reganmanagement@gmail.com

From: [Chris Reilly](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 8:50:31 AM

I am backing the proposed change of designation of the New River Gorge to a national park. I feel the New River Gorge is a remarkable landscape that deserves the same protection, support and recognition as our nation's other one of a kind natural landmarks like Yosemite Valley or Yellowstone National Park.

Chris Reilly
1454 Blossom Hill Rd, Pittsburgh, PA 15234

creillypgh@gmail.com

From: [Kevin Richards](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 8:11:55 PM

I truly support this measure.

Kevin Richards
1316 State Route 30
Clinton, PA 15026

Kevin Richards

From: [Debra L. Ridgway](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 3:41:03 PM

Dear US Senators,

**My name is Debra L. Ridgway and I live at Ashbrooke Court in Bridgeport, WV.
I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve.
I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.**

Sincerely,

Deb Ridgway

Debra L. Ridgway

March 2, 2020

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From: [Joseph D Ritchie Jr](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: S. 2555 National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 1:51:22 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Joe Ritchie and I live at 266 Deegan Lake Drive in Bridgeport WV. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

**Sincerely,
Joe Ritchie**

From: skiww17@aol.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 4:25:14 PM

Dear State Leaders,

I am a born and raised WV Girl that has worked in the outdoor industry for over 32 years! I also teach public high school in WV and encourage my students to enjoy their state and what it has to offer! Please make our beautiful New and Gualay Rivers Area a national park, to protect it in its natural beauty before it is too late! I do not want the WV Rivers end up like the commercial Canadian side of the beautiful Niagara Falls!

Connie Roadcap
100 Breezy Place
Elkview, WV 25071

From: [James Roberson, Jr.](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge designation
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:04:25 PM

My name is James A Roberson Jr. and I live at 1351 Belvo Estates Drive in Miamisburg, Ohio 45342. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

I have visited this area on several occasions and it is truly a remarkable specimen of the beauty found in this part of the country.

Sincerely,

James A Roberson, Jr.

February 25, 2020

244

From: [Wanda Robertson](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 s.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 6:08:32 PM

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Dear US Senators,

My name is Wanda Robertson__ and I live at 990 US Rt 52, Delbarton, WV 25670. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Wanda Robertson
March 2, 2020

From: [Wade Roth](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 11:10:49 PM

February 25, 2020

Dear US Senators,

I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

My family has regularly visited and vacationed in the New River Gorge area for nearly two decades. We are looking forward to protecting the area so we can provide opportunities for fond memories to future generations. Things like watching bears foraging for food, owls navigate through dense forest at dusk, seeing a bald eagle nest, watching a family of skunks scamper through the underbrush, finding a tortoise next to a trailhead, expanses of wildflowers, white water rafting, and many more.

Best regards,
Wade Roth
118 Pinewood Dr, Bridgeville, PA 15017
wade.roth@gmail.com

From: [Alice Rowan](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S.2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Saturday, February 29, 2020 2:50:53 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Mary Alice Rowan and I live at 4114 Jewel Street, Alexandria, VA 22312. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 (New River Gorge) National Park and Preserve. I believe creating the New River Gorge as a National Park will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Mary Alice Rowan

February 29, 2020

From: [Mike Sasala](#)
To: [fortherecord@energy](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NHD National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 8:51:56 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Michael Sasala and I live at 964 Caxton Lane, 44212. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Michael Sasala

Date 3/4/2020

From: [Lisa Schessler](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Friday, February 28, 2020 12:13:22 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Elizabeth Schessler and I live at 409 N. Harwich Cir. Morgantown WV, 26508. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth M. Schessler
February 28, 2020

From: [Schindler, Deanna](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 4:00:49 PM

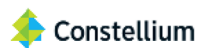
Dear US Senators,

My name is Deanna Schindler and I live in Ravenswood, WV. I am writing to show my support for S.2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe that this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Deanna Schindler
 February 24, 2020

Deanna Schindler
Sr. Inside Sales Representative
Aerospace and Transportation
 Constellium Rolled Products Ravenswood, LLC
 P.O. Box 68
 Ravenswood, WV 26164
 Office phone: 800-258-6686 x 6130 or Direct: 304.273.6130
 Fax: 304.273.6509
 Mail: deanna.schindler@constellium.com



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From: [Jake Schumann](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 10:34:16 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jake Schumann and I live in Columbus, Ohio. I have made many trips down to West Virginia's beautiful New River Gorge and I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Jake Schumann
3/3/2020



Jake Schumann
 Preconstruction Engineer
Corna Kokosing
 6245 Westerville Road | Westerville, Ohio 43081
direct 614.212.5813
mobile 937.474.1980
email jts@corna.biz
web www.corna.com



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From: tschweer@zoomtown.com
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:55:19 AM

To Whom it may Concern :

My name is Tom Schweeer and I live at 1201 West Loveland Ave, Loveland , Ohio 45140.

**I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve.
I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.**

Sincerely,

**Tom Schweeer
02/26/2020**

From: [Peggy Scono](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020 6:32:52 AM

To whom it may concern,

We live in Daniels , West Virginia and have for almost 6 years. Originally we lived in Ohio for 60 years. We love West Virginia- the beauty, the people, the mountains, etc. It is what drew us here! Obviously the economy struggles in the mountain state and with coal industry on the decline our state would benefit by drawing more folks like us to visit or move here who love the outdoors and all the natural beauty West Virginia has to offer.

There is no question that expanding and developing the New River and surrounding areas in West Virginia into a larger national park would greatly benefit the economics of West Virginia. And we are hoping and praying this legislation will pass which would no doubt benefit the state of West Virginia!

We do realize there are folks who are fighting against this due to their desire for more hunting territory but it's clear that there will still be plenty of wilderness for hunters to hunt in outside of the proposed WV national park.

Thank you,
Peggy and Joe Scono
162 Exmoor Lane
Daniels, WV 25832

From: [Melody Simpson](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 6:53:25 PM

Dear U.S. Senators,

I am writing to express my support **for** S. 2555, to designate the New River Gorge a National Park and Preserve.

My name is Melody Simpson, and I live at 21 Carriage Road, Charleston, West Virginia, 25314. My husband and I have built a second home on the rim of the New River Gorge, at 505 Peregrine Ridge Road, Lansing, West Virginia, which will ultimately be our retirement home. At present, we spend most weekends there and hike, bike, and generally enjoy the beautiful scenery and wild life.

The New River Gorge is spectacular wilderness and beauty, and one of a kind. Designating it as a National Park and Preserve will ensure it remains wild and wonderful, and available for future generations to enjoy. The economic impact of such a designation will also benefit present and future generations of West Virginians.

Please **support** S. 2555.

Thank you,
Melody Simpson
(304) 543-0957

February 25, 2020

From: [Patti Simpson](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 2:26:31 PM

I am in favor of making the New Rifer Gorge a National Park!
Patricia Simpson
9559 Morrow Rossburg Road
Pleasant Plain OH 45162

Patti Simpson
Senior Account Manager
JBM Packaging
2850 Henkle Drive
Lebanon, OH 45036

(513) 228-3024 (Office)
(513) 615-4808 (Cell)



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From: [Jeremy Skeenes](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge to become the next National Park
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 12:50:03 PM
Attachments: [nitro_emailsiq icon 277ec5e1-2ecf-425a-b493-3765add3ee4.png](#)

Dear US Senators,

My name is Jeremy Skeenes and I live at 4294 Coal River Road in Alum Creek, WV. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely, *Jeremy Skeenes*

Name Jeremy Skeenes

Date 3/02/2020



Jeremy Skeenes | Project Manager
Nitro Construction Services, Inc.
4300 1st Ave., Nitro, WV 25143
Office: 304-204-1527 | **Cell:** 304-533-3229
Website: nitroconstructionservices.com

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From: [Janille Stearmer](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 1:00:45 PM

Please protect and preserve this great national resource for all to enjoy for lifetimes to come. I support the re-designation of the New River Gorge as a National Park and Preserve.

Thank you,

Janille Stearmer
3144 Mount Holyoke Road
Upper Arlington, OH 43221

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From: [Stephenson, Sid/SCH](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:35:56 AM

I am writing in support of the above referenced legislative initiative in support of this designation. I am a life-long resident of West Virginia and spend many days at the new River Gorge each year. I have introduced friends and work colleagues to the area and they all marvel at the natural beauty and the amount of outdoor recreational opportunities provided in this area.

I hope that congress will support and approve the designations.

Sidney Stephenson
15 Mahood Trace
Huntington, WV 25705
304-541-1926

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From: [Strader, Gregory](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 12:08:31 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Greg Strader and I live in Buckhannon West Virginia. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia

Sincerely,

Greg Strader
Assistant Director of Campus Life
West Virginia Wesleyan College
59 College Ave.
Buckhannon, WV 26201
strader.g@wwc.edu

From: [Chris Sweeney](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 3:03:54 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I'd like to express my wholehearted support for having the New River Gorge region designated as a National Park. My family travels regularly to this area and we are astounded with the unique power and beauty of the New River Gorge. The breadth of outdoor recreation options surpasses anything else we've seen. It's a hidden gem that should be protected/preserved while also recognized as one of the most spectacular in all of the eastern US.

We hope you will rule in favor of this request.

Christopher Sweeney
824 Beech Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

From: [Meagan Szekely](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 11:02:56 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Meagan Szekely and I live at 1109 Arrowleaf Ct Crofton, MD 21114. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Meagan Szekely
March 2, 2020

From: [Richard Terrell](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Thursday, March 19, 2020 7:55:56 PM

I am writing to urge you to designate the New River Gorge as a National Park. This will help provide protection for its unique landscape and recreational resources for generations to come. As someone who has rafted the New River, I can personally attest to its beauty, diversity, wildlife, and uniqueness (north flowing river)!

The river and lands provide a great educational and team-building venue for school groups, Boy and Girl Scouts, etc. As a National Park it will greatly increase tourism, employment and financial benefits to an economically depressed area of the country.

The New River Gorge richly deserves to be designated a National Park!

Richard P Terrell
9507 Highlander Circle
Walkersville, MD 21793

Email: rpt9507@gmail.com

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Dorothy Tipton](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 12:29:25 PM

February 26, 2020

Dear US Senators:

This is a letter of support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I was lucky enough to travel to this area for 5-6 years -- and hope to return soon. It would certainly benefit the local area but also benefit the entire state of West Virginia and the surrounding states. And not just benefiting with the economic impact but ensuring that this area would be protected so that the next generation can enjoy the beauty.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dorothy M. Tipton
412 Frederick Street
Monroe, LA 71201

From: [Stephanie Toothman](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:26:43 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Stephanie Toothman and I live at 3819 Grafton Road, Morgantown, WV 26508. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Toothman

2/25/20

From: [Dean Trierwiler](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 12:23:24 PM

Dear US Senators,

We are writing to show our support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia -- as well as better ensure that the area is preserved and protected for future generations. The nature beauty of the area is as breath-taking as any we have seen in the many national parks we have visited. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Dean and Melody Trierwiler
109 Capitol Street, #500A
Charleston, WV 25301
Senior Pass Holder*

From: [Bruce](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 3:14:16 PM

I am a River guide with Ace Adventure resort, and I whole heartedly agree with the NRG, being designated a National Park! West Virginia is a beautiful place which needs tourism, and the protection this designation would bring.

Bruce Tuxhorn
bltuxhorn@gmail.com
970-589-7724

Seasonally located at Cooters Cabins and Campground, Fayetteville, WV.

Winter in Florida
5095 Bay St NE
Bldg # 600. Apt# 111
St. Petersburg, FL. 33703

From: [Emily Meadows](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 6:57:25 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Emily Vanegas and I live at 7873 NW 70th Ave Parkland, FL 33607. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Emily Vanegas

2.25.2020

From: [Tim VanVoorhis](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge National Park & Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 9:08:25 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

I think it is a great opportunity to preserve an area for future generations. This area has brought many exciting and awesome experiences for my family. Please move forward with preserving this area. Thank you.

Tim VanVoorhis
General Manager



PK Controls, Inc.
8000 Corporate Blvd.
Plain City, Ohio 43064
Tel: 614.733.0979 ext. 226
Fax: 614.733.0639
Cell: 614.561.8345
www.pkcontrols.com

From: [Debbie Waggy](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 8:23:31 AM

Dear US Senators:

My name is Deborah Waggy and I live at 11364 S. Wolf Creek Pike, Brookville OH 45309. I am writing to show support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Deborah Waggy
March 4, 2020

Sent from my iPad

From: [Michael Waldron](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 2:10:50 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Michael Waldron and I live at 1162 Red Ash Ct, Dayton OH 45458. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,
Michael Waldron
25FEB2020

From: Jodi Weiksnar <tjweiksnar@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2020 9:10 AM
To: fortherecord (Energy) <fortherecord_@energy.senate.gov>
Subject: Change New River National River to New River National Park and Preserve

Dear Senators:

My family and I have vacationed in the Midwest for many years. We live in Florida, but go north for the Summer to mountain bike, hike, climb and raft. Our children have gone through the Scouting programs, both girl and boy scouts. Through scouting we have developed a family of outdoor friends. We have made trips specifically to Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Dry Tortugas National Parks. We have a book of the National Parks that guide our vacation planning. Several of our friends do the same.

We by chance happened upon Fayetteville WV and fell in love with the outdoor area. Everything we love to do in a beautiful protected area. Not so spread out as Colorado, and not as much altitude or attitude. The New River is a perfect destination for our family. We have climbed, ridden, rafted and even started hiking because of the trail system and history of the area.

I say by chance, because we did not seek the New River specifically, we were mountain biking near Nantahala River and continued North "hearing about some great trails " near Fayetteville. The designation of National River did not adequately describe the breadth of activities that are available in the area nor the size and character of the landscape. The lush trails are a welcome change to the arid West. We love it and have returned many years to the New River. We tell friends, but the designation of National Park and Preserve would help explain how special the area is. That title tells potential visitors that our Government cares about this land and believes it special. Special enough to warrant a visit. If you have not camped or ridden the New River, you should put it on your list. I lived in Washington D.C. for a few years and went to Sulfur Springs and the Greenbriar. Never heard about New River. I support the change of name. I would like to see more infrastructure around Fayetteville. It does not and should not be a place reserved for the few that know about it or the most experienced outdoorsmen. The New River should be shared and I think the name change is a good tool to do that.

Tom Weiksnar and family
Palm City Florida
772.763.8672

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [Larry Orr](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: S.2555
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 7:34:46 AM

The West Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited (WVCTU) submitted comments on December 10, 2018 re the New River Gorge National River becoming a National Park. The WVCTU position is unchanged, and is repeated below for the record.

The West Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited (WVCTU) is neutral on whether the New River Gorge National River should become a National Park.

If it becomes a National Park, the WV Division of Natural Resources must continue to manage the wildlife resources and hunting must be allowed.

Larry Orr

WVCTU Treasurer



3422 Pennsylvania Avenue
Charleston, WV 25302

Phone 304-342-6511
Fax 304-345-1538

Address Correspondence to:
PO Box 2391
Charleston, WV 25328

Website: www.wvhta.com

WVHTA Statement of Support For The New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Act.

WVHTA is in favor of the bill to designate the New River Gorge in West Virginia as the 'New River Gorge National Park and Preserve'. Tourism is growing in West Virginia, and this will be another tool in the toolbox to help us to continue growing that. Tourism can help us diversify our economy and transform this region for the future. We need to take advantage of the momentum our tourism industry is seeing at this moment.

Our members will be directly impacted by this change in a positive manner. They will have the potential to attract more tourists at their hotels, restaurants, and stores. They will have the opportunity to see more tourists book rafting, skiing, zip lining and ATV adventures throughout the year. In 2018, the National Park Service received over 318 million recreation visits. It's time for this beautiful area to see a piece of that pie.

Tourists across the country and world make travel plans to attend every state park and preserve across our beautiful country. This will be an opportunity for many of those tourists to check another off their list. It will also give us the opportunity to showcase our state to tourists and really show them why we are wild and wonderful. Recently, we have seen the impact National Park status can have on tourism. Designating the Indiana Sand Dunes to a National Park has almost doubled its visitation. Imagine if we could double the visitation for the New River Gorge.

This change will not only help the tourism industry, but also will create positive opportunities in our local and regional economies. From Fayetteville to Hinton to Oak Hill and everywhere in between, this will help our towns immensely.

I appreciate your time and indulgence today. To Senators Capito and Manchin, we appreciate your many continued years of support of the tourism and hospitality industries. We look forward to working with you both in the years to come.

Thank you,

Carol S. Fulks – Executive Director
West Virginia Hospitality & Travel Association

From: [Joe Whittington](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge
Date: Saturday, February 29, 2020 10:03:21 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Joseph Whittington **and I live** at 5107 Hulbert Drive in Charleston, WV. **I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.**

Sincerely,

Name Joseph Whittington

Date 2/29/2020

From: [Tim and Chris Whyte](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: "2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve"
Date: Wednesday, March 4, 2020 9:10:18 AM

Hello,

I am not great at putting my thoughts and feelings in writing.

I have learned that you are considering making the New River Gorge a National Park. Praises to you.

I am a nature lover and I find total peace when I visit the New River Gorge and spend time in the forest and

white water rafting. There is a peace and tranquility there that you can't easily find in other places. The rich history of

the West Virginia coal mining found along the New River is amazing. It was a great teaching moment when my husband

and I took our 2 boys rafting 2-3 years ago. I pray that this is passed to protect that heritage and keep the area from

being developed, which would destroy what is there.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I pray that the right decision is made.

Christine Whyte

5711 Colerain Avenue

Cincinnati, Ohio 45239

February 25, 2020

Sarah E. Williams
4404 Leatherwood Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
Sarah.williams.insurance@gmail.com
757-635-8131

Re: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve

Dear United States Senators:

I am writing to show my support for designating the New River Gorge a National Park and Preserve. I have made the six hour drive from my home in Virginia Beach several times since discovering the area a few years ago. I believe this is a truly unique place that should be preserved for my daughter, and her future children to enjoy, as I have. I also believe this will have a positive economic impact on the area, region and state of West Virginia. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah E. Williams".

Sarah E. Williams

From: [Williamson, Henry](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:01:22 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is H.L. Williamson and I live at 133 Sunny Bank Rd., Lynchburg, VA 24502. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia. This is the first place I've visited in West Virginia and have returned several times to enjoy outdoor activities and recreations. This area is very beautiful and should be preserved for others, our future generations, to see and enjoy.

**Sincerely,
H.L. Williamson
2/25/2020**

H. L. Williamson
Facilities Maintenance Technician
Master HVAC Technician
Lynchburg, VA 24504
434-546-3639



PACIFIC LIFE

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From: [Roger Wilson](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: New River Gorge National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, February 24, 2020 11:22:25 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Roger Wilson and I live at 653 Jenkins Fork Rd, Fayetteville WV 25840. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely

Roger Wilson

2/4/2020

From: [Valerie Wilson](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: Senate Hearing S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve 2-22-2020
Date: Sunday, February 23, 2020 1:50:36 PM

I support the redesignation of New River Gorge National River to New River Gorge National Park. In the long run it will improve the economy in WV. Hunting was down by 18% last year. Such a small population of hunting hobbyists should not infringe on the rest of the public's interest. There are vast areas nearby that can be used by hunters.

Valerie Wilson
653 Jenkins Fork Rd, Fayetteville, WV 25840

February 29, 2020

To: fortherecord@energy.senate.gov

Re: New River Gorge National Park and Preserve Designation Act (S. 2555)

As a local resident and small business owner (fishing guide) I, along with my spouse, oppose the proposed name change/designation for multiple reasons with the most significant being highlighted below:

1. The area is not adequate.

Although the New River Gorge is a beautiful and scenic place, the current boat ramps, camping areas and roadways within the existing National River boundary could not meet the demands of a substantial increase in visitors. From Memorial Day through Labor Day, the parking areas provided at the boat launches and hiking areas are overcrowded which results in people parking in undesignated areas or simply leaving without participating in the recreational activity they had planned to engage in. I have had clients with me on a pre-scheduled, paid trip and therefore had no choice but to find some place to park my vehicle and trailer. I have heard of vehicles being towed. Fortunately, I have not been towed but have been given a warning. These are not experiences you would want for visitors. Although creating some additional parking is needed and would be good, I believe creating a substantially larger area would take away from the natural beauty which attracts people to the area.

In consideration of the quality of the recreational area, particularly the river, when it is at its peak with clear water flowing between the awesome mountains, it is breath taking and of a quality worth being noted as a place you have to visit. However, in running a business with trips on this segment of the New River, I have found this often is not the case. The water regularly turns brown from upstream sediment. Any time there is heavy rain upstream within West Virginia or Virginia the result is days of high, brown water within the National River segment. It can typically take up to a week for the water to return to a normal coloration. The brown water is unattractive, not good for recreational fishing or boating and the high water at times can be dangerous. Local residents and guides know the limits of the river but I fear some visitors would not. Visitors would inevitably come at the wrong time and be quite disappointed.

2. Park funding is not adequate.

I attended the public hearing on February 22nd 2020 and as I drove home on my standard route which passes through the National River boundary, my eyes were drawn to the litter along the road sides. This is definitely not something to be proud of and not what I see when I think of a National Park. Don't take me wrong, it wasn't like driving through a landfill but it definitely is not a pristine area. The blame first goes to residents and visitors for their inconsiderate actions. However, I also see this as a National Park Service maintenance issue possibly due to budget shortage and therefore insufficient staffing. I had been told that the National Park Service as a whole has funding shortages and have found evidence that the fact is true. A 2019 article in the Harvard Gazette indicates that the National Park Service is underfunded and has a \$12 billion maintenance back log.

Even at the public meeting one speaker asked for donations to the park. Is that the point the park service is at, needing to ask for charity? My intent is not to speak negatively of the service, this is just where my mind went upon hearing this. We definitely don't need to add any further

burden to the service. Furthermore, this leads one to question how the park service will be able to operate the areas as National Park without adding entry fees in the future. It is being said now that there will be no fees. There may not be fees initially but can that be guaranteed indefinitely? If we are given this guarantee in the current proposal what keeps there from being additional bills introduced to change anything within this bill in the future, including fees?

3. Effects to Local Users

Additional visitors and fees would be a hardship on local residents. Over the years I have visited with many people along the river. There are local residents who cannot afford typical vacation expenses and therefore retreat to the river with their families and children. There are also those local residents who take trips to the river as it is part of their heritage. I know this to be true as I grew up here and it is a part of my heritage. Increased visitors or fees would likely discourage local residents from using the areas.

The current alternative proposes loss of hunting territory within the designated national park areas which is a direct effect upon local users. There has been a substantial loss in hunting areas in southern WV. If you do not own a large tract of land or cannot afford lease fees, hunting opportunities are becoming scarce. Public land should be available for all users, as much as is practical. We have been able to share this public land in previous years and should be able to continue to do so. This restriction is specifically a result of this change. Are there other restrictions with the National Park designation that we are not yet aware of?

4. Loss of State Resource Management

With the change to National Park and Preserve, the West Virginia state agency which manages such resources, the Division of Natural Resources would lose management authority within the boundaries. This would include wildlife and fish monitoring, research and stocking. The WVDNR has spent years monitoring and stocking a special strain of "New River Walleye". The program has been successful in reestablishing a resource to these waters. This would end that program for the WVDNR, as well as trout stocking in the tributaries, etc. The state's resources should continue to be managed by the state agency.

The National River nor National Park Service are in a suitable state for such a change and more importantly the losses for West Virginia are not worth what has been cited as potential gains. Historically, West Virginia has been exploited for its resources and given up management which has affected its long term economic prosperity. As West Virginians, why not maintain and work to improve the resource we currently partially have and then focus our efforts more on promoting it properly ourselves rather than completely giving it away to a struggling federal agency?

Thank you for your time and consideration of these comments.

Bo Wolfe
Bethany Wolfe
PO Box 203
Layland, WV 25864

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From: [Donna Woodard](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 10:37:51 AM

Please designate the New River Gorge a National Park ! It is a significant treasure and we always enjoy visiting.

Donna Woodard
2600 Sherwood Drive
Navarre FL32566

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Brian Woodbury](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020 3:22:26 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Brian Woodbury and I live at 8518 Wynhurst Court, Raleigh NC 27613. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Brian Woodbury

25 Feb 2020

Brian Woodbury
LightSmart Energy Consulting, LLC
Mobile: 617.821.2868
brian.woodbury@lightsmartconsulting.com

From: [Diana McAnallen](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 9:18:19 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Diana Wulff and I live at 562 Mercer Rd. Butler, PA 16001. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Diana Wulff

2/26/2020

From: [Erica Yeakel](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Monday, March 2, 2020 10:09:02 PM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Erica Yeakel and I live at 2160 Fontaine Rd. Apt. 529 Lexington, KY 40502. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,

Erica Yeakel

03/02/2020

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From: [Christopher Yoder](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2020 11:13:45 AM

Dear US Senators,

My name is Chris Yoder and I live at 2123 Red Fox Drive Hummelstown, PA 17036. I am writing to show my support for S. 2555 National Park and Preserve. I believe this will help the area, region, and state of West Virginia.

Sincerely,
Chris Yoder
2/26/2020

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Chris Yoder
Cyoder815@gmail.com
717.487.1610

From: [Dallas Yuhasz](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National Park and Preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 2:31:23 PM

New River Gorge is beautiful, natural, and one of the best places I've ever visited. **It certainly deserves National Park status.**

Thank you,

Dallas Yuhasz
106 Truman Dr
Monaca, PA 15061

From: [Christina Zirkle](#)
To: [fortherecord \(Energy\)](#)
Subject: 2-22-2020 S. 2555 NRG National park and preserve
Date: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 5:50:35 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am in favor of the New River Gorge becoming a National Park. The NRG is an area of history, scenery, recreation, and wildlife that needs to be preserved and shared.

The establishment of the NRG becoming a National Park would bring so many more people into our lovely state. Many people from all over the United States have the goal of visiting every National Park, but not necessarily every state. Also, I believe that many people in surrounding states will find that it is a place they need to visit if it becomes a National Park.

Thank you for your time,

Christina Zirkle
1378 Murphy Station Rd
Buckhannon, WV 26201

