

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program
Region 1 North Atlantic-Appalachian



York River Wild and Scenic River Study January 2020

Public Comment Summary and Analysis Report



June 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Study Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS) conducted a Wild and Scenic River Study of the York River and its tributaries in the State of Maine. The purpose of the study was to determine whether segments of the York River and its tributaries are eligible and suitable for inclusion as components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System).

The York River Wild and Scenic River Study (Study) was authorized by the U.S. Congress under Public Law 113-291, The Carl Levin and Howard P. 'Buck' McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, which was enacted on December 19, 2014. As directed by Congress, the Study was conducted based on the established Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers model and considered the possible inclusion into the National System of the York River from its headwaters at York Pond to the mouth of the river at York Harbor, and all associated tributaries.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was established by Congress in 1968 to protect certain outstanding rivers from the harmful effects of new federal projects such as dams and hydroelectric facilities. Each river designated into the National System receives permanent protection from federally authorized or assisted dams, diversions, channelization or other water resources projects that would have a direct and adverse effect on its free-flowing condition, water quality, or outstandingly remarkable values. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1271-1287) also explicitly prohibits any new hydropower dam or related facilities licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on or directly affecting a designated river segment.

The York River Wild and Scenic River Study was conducted in collaboration with the York River Study Committee (Study Committee) which is comprised of appointees from the municipalities within the Study area and representatives from state agencies, and other local partners and stakeholders. Additional background on the Study, including the companion document *York River Watershed Stewardship Plan*, which was developed as part of the Study, is posted on the York River Study Committee's website at: www.yorkrivermaine.org.

In accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the NPS developed a Report to Congress, the *York River Wild and Scenic River Study, January 2020* (Study Report), which describes the agency's finding regarding the eligibility and suitability of the York River for inclusion into the National System. The NPS then sought public and agency comment on the Study Report. The Study Report describes the study process, the area studied, the river's water quality and flow conditions, and the outstandingly remarkable natural and cultural resource values related to the York River and its tributaries.

The Study Report concludes that 30.8 miles of the York River and its major tributaries are both eligible and suitable for designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. If added to the National System, the York River designation would be based on the Partnership Wild and Scenic River model which emphasizes local management and control, with the National Park Service in a predominantly support role.

For the York River and its major tributaries to become components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System the U.S. Congress would have to introduce and enact additional legislation designating the rivers into the National System. If such legislation was enacted, the *York River Watershed Stewardship Plan* would serve as the comprehensive river management plan required for all congressionally designated rivers and would provide the framework for voluntary implementation of recommended actions to support the designation.

Public Comment Activities

As a part of the Study process, and to comply with the requirements of Section 4 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the NPS conducted a 90-day public and agency comment period from January 10, 2020 through April 10, 2020. The general public, agencies, and stakeholders were invited to submit comments on the Study Report during this time period.

Press Release and PEPC

On January 10, 2020, the NPS issued a press release to area wide news organizations and posted information including the Study Report and appendices to the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC) website. A link to the accompanying *York River Watershed Stewardship Plan* (August 2018) prepared by the locally-based Study Committee with assistance from the NPS was also posted on the PEPC website. The press release and PEPC website provided a project overview and invited the public to review the Study Report and/or provide comments. Members of the public were encouraged to submit comments on the Study Report electronically through PEPC or via U.S. mail by sending written comments to the Branch Chief for Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers. The press release and PEPC included notification of the 90-day public comment period.

Agency Comment

On January 10, 2020, the NPS distributed letters to various federal and state agencies to invite participation during the 90-day public comment period. Agencies were encouraged to submit comments on the Study Report electronically at the PEPC website or via U.S. mail by sending written comments to the Branch Chief for Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers at the NPS Boston Support Office.

During the 90-day comment period, zero (0) correspondences were received via the PEPC website from agencies that were sent letters inviting comment. In addition, zero (0) correspondences were received via U.S. Mail from federal or state agencies.

Nature of the Comments Received during 90-Day Public Comment Period

Sixty-two (62) pieces of public correspondence from people in eleven (11) cities/towns (place names) were received during the public comment period. Individuals living within the vicinity of the project area (York County) submitted sixty-one (98.4 %) of those correspondence pieces. Of the total, sixty (60) pieces of correspondence were submitted electronically through PEPC, one (1) was submitted via U.S. Mail, and one (1) was submitted via email directly to the Study team. The submissions received via U.S. Mail and email were subsequently entered into PEPC for analysis with the other pieces of public correspondence that were received electronically.

Most of the comments received during the public comment period expressed support for Wild and Scenic River designation. Several comments expressed opposition to Wild and Scenic River designation. All comments, regardless of their topic, were carefully read and analyzed and are presented in this report.

From the correspondence received, below are the main concerns and/or issues identified:

- Many commenters supported Wild and Scenic River designation. Themes expressed by these commenters included:
 - Commenters noted the presence of unique and high value river-related resources and stated that designation is a good way to protect the river and these resources.

- Commenters observed that the Study Committee and NPS provided broad and thorough outreach and education to landowners and others.
- Commenters highlighted the strong local support for Wild and Scenic River designation.
- Commenters reported that they understood what designation involved, and that it would not infringe upon the towns' or individuals' rights.
- Commenters remarked about the benefits of a local-federal partnership, coordinated stewardship approach, and influx of federal funding.
- Commenters stated that the Study Report and Stewardship Plan accurately reflect the thorough work of the Wild and Scenic Study.
- Several commenters opposed Wild and Scenic River designation. Themes expressed by these commenters included:
 - Commenters stated that the Study Committee and NPS provided inadequate outreach and education to riverfront landowners.
 - Commenters voiced concern about federal government overreach and involvement in local affairs.
 - Commenters expressed appreciation for the river and its benefits and stated that the river is cared for by riverfront landowners and already well protected; no additional protection is needed.
 - Commenters stated that vocal opposition to designation was not accurately represented in the Study Report.
 - Commenters expressed concern that designation will increase visitor use and negatively impact the river.

Summary of Agency Comments Received

The NPS did not receive any correspondence from federal or state agencies during the 90-day comment period.

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THE COMMENT ANALYSIS PROCESS

Comment analysis is a process used to compile and organize similar public comments into a format that can be used by the Study team and decision makers. The comment analysis process aids the Study team in identifying the topics and issues of concern to the public. The process includes five main components:

- developing a coding structure to organize comments by topics;
- employing a comment database for comment management;
- reading and coding public comments;
- interpreting and analyzing the comments to identify issues and themes; and
- preparing a comment summary.

A coding structure was developed to help sort comments into logical groups by topic and issue. The coding structure was derived from comments received from members of the public. The coding structure was designed to capture all comment content rather than to restrict or exclude any ideas.

The PEPC database was used to manage and organize the comments. The database stores the full text of all correspondence and allows each comment to be coded by topic or issue. Outputs from the database, which are provided as tables in Chapter 3: Comment Summary (Content Analysis Report), include tallies of the total number of pieces of correspondence and comments received, sorting and reporting of comments by topic or issue, and demographic information about the sources of the comments. Analysis of the public comments in PEPC involves assigning the codes to statements made by the public in their web forms, letters, emails, and other written correspondence. All comments received during the public comment period were read and analyzed.

Although the comment analysis process attempts to capture the full range of public concerns, comment analysis is not a vote-counting process and this report is not intended as a statistical analysis. This report is intended to be a summary of the different concerns, issues, and opinions expressed in the comments received. The emphasis is on content of the comments, rather than the number of times a particular comment was received.

Definition of Terms

Primary terms used in the document are defined below:

Correspondence: A correspondence is the entire document received from the public – including individuals, organizations, government officials, and agency representatives. It can be in the form of a letter or PEPC website comment form.

Comment: A comment is a portion of the text within a correspondence that addresses a single subject. It could include such information as an expression of support or opposition to a proposed activity, additional data regarding the existing condition, an opinion questioning a matter of policy, or an opinion about the adequacy of an analysis.

Code: A grouping centered on a common topic or subject matter with which the public is concerned.

Concern Statement: Concern statements were developed to summarize the multiple issues represented by the comments.

Guide to This Document

This report is organized as follows:

Content Analysis Report – This is the basic report produced from PEPC that provides information on the numbers and types of comments received, organized by code.

Public Comment Summary – This report summarizes the comments received. These comments are organized by codes and further organized into concern statements.

COMMENT SUMMARY (CONTENT ANALYSIS REPORT)

This report summarizes 83 comments taken from 62 public correspondences received during the 90-day public comment period; zero (0) agency correspondences were received during the 90-day comment period. Comments were categorized into three (3) topics identified by unique codes. For the purpose of this report, all comments relevant to the Study were coded.

Issues, concerns, and comments were organized into three codes: (1) expression of sentiment favorable to Wild and Scenic River designation, (2) expression of sentiment unfavorable to Wild and Scenic River designation, and (3) expression of sentiment not germane to Wild and Scenic River designation.

The distribution of comments by code is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Comment Distribution by Code

Code	Description	Number of Correspondences	% of Total
PS1000	Public Sentiment: Favorable to Wild and Scenic River Designation	56	90.3%
PS2000	Public Sentiment: Unfavorable to Wild and Scenic River Designation	4	6.5%
PS3000	Public Sentiment: Not Germane to Wild and Scenic River Designation	2	3.2%
TOTAL		62	100.0%

The majority of correspondence received was from unaffiliated individuals or self-identified riverfront landowners (Table 2).

Table 2: Correspondence by Organization Type

Organization Type	Number of Correspondences	% of Total
Business Organization	1	1.6%
Conservation/Preservation	6	9.7%
Regional Planning	1	1.6%
Riverfront Landowner	20	32.3%
State Government (Legislator)	1	1.6%
Town or City Government	3	4.8%
Unaffiliated Individual	30	48.4%
TOTAL	62	100.0%

Table 3 shows the distribution of how correspondence was received.

Table 3: Correspondence Distribution by Correspondence Type

Type	Number of Correspondences	% of Total
Web Form	60	96.8%
Letter	1	1.6%
E-mail	1	1.6%
Other	0	0.0%
TOTAL	62	100.0%

With most of the river miles comprising the York River and its major tributaries being in the Town of York, Maine, the majority of correspondence was received from commenters within that municipality (Table 4).

Table 4: Correspondence Distribution by City (Place Name)

City/Town	State	Number of Correspondences	% of Total
Cape Neddick	ME	1	1.6%
Eliot	ME	2	3.2%
Kittery	ME	4	6.5%
Kittery Point	ME	2	3.2%
Saco	ME	1	1.6%
Salem	IN	1	1.6%
South Berwick	ME	2	3.2%
Topsham	ME	1	1.6%
Wells	ME	3	4.8%
York	ME	38	61.3%
York Harbor	ME	7	11.3%
TOTAL	ME	62	100.0%

It is possible that the one piece of correspondence received from outside the region (Salem, IN) was inadvertently submitted to the wrong PEPC project; it did not contain any comments germane to the York River Wild and Scenic River Study. There were no international comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT SUMMARY

90-Day Comment Period (January 10 – April 10, 2020)

Table 5: Comments in Favor/Support of Wild and Scenic River Designation

PS1000 Public Sentiment: Favorable to Wild and Scenic River Designation	
Issues/Concerns	
Concern Statement 1:	Commenters noted the presence of unique and high value river-related resources and stated that designation is a good way to protect the river and these resources.
Representative Quotes:	
Correspondence ID:	4
Comment ID:	003
Comment Text:	"Protection is needed-to preserve this fragile ecosystem, the commercial fishery it supports, the recreational opportunities it affords, and economic benefits accruing to property owners and the businesses York's wild and scenic environment supports."
Correspondence ID:	8
Comment ID:	008
Comment Text:	"I am very much in favor of the wild and scenic designation for the York River. It would be beneficial to deeper science, and to all living creatures who depend on this ecosystem."
Correspondence ID:	11
Comment ID:	011
Comment Text:	"Please help us preserve this unique river by giving it the designation of being a Wild and Scenic River."
Correspondence ID:	12
Comment ID:	012
Comment Text:	"I own property on the York River and I fully support including the river and its tributaries in the national Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. Over the last couple of decades, I have seen how over-use can threaten the health of the river and marine life it harbors. [A]fter attending several public meetings explaining the program and the designation process, and reading the Study Committee's report, I am convinced designation will be a real benefit for all."
Correspondence ID:	13
Comment ID:	013
Comment Text:	"Of particular concern to Kittery is protection of its drinking water resources. The Kittery Water District reservoirs, including one dedicated for use by the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, are all located within the watershed. Responsible conservation is vital to protecting that resource."
Correspondence ID:	19
Comment ID:	018

Comment Text: "We have to be vigilant to keep this spectacular river and the watershed healthy for so many important reasons: potable well water, sea level rise resilience, historical preservation, recreation, respectful tourism, nature preservation, Maine quality of life."

Correspondence ID: 23

Comment ID: 027

Comment Text: "I fish, kayak and boat on the York River and have for more than 60 years. I want to retain its beauty and its health for my child and my grandchildren. This designation is the best way to help us understand the complex character of the river and to engage the York community and surrounding communities to strengthen our stewardship of this treasure."

Correspondence ID: 26

Comment ID: 034

Comment Text: "We have a treasure in our midst. When I was a boy in the 1940s and '50s, the river was polluted from raw sewage. Striped bass disappeared. Now the river is much cleaner and the stripers are back, but the river's health and its beauty are dependent on what we do in the watershed. That is why it is so important to protect the watershed now with a Wild and Scenic designation."

Correspondence ID: 27

Comment ID: 035

Comment Text: "Our lobsters are stored in the river and any protection of water quality will be a positive outcome for locals who have enjoyed our catch for generations. Protecting working waterfront is paramount to maintain a thriving community supported by locals and tourists alike. Our livelihood depends on this designation being approved and also for recognizing the great opportunity to coordinate protection of this historic river throughout all communities involved."

Correspondence ID: 31

Comment ID: 039

Comment Text: "I value this town's history and support this designation as it seeks to maintain the many river values that are important to community character (scenic, historic, working waterfront/commercial, ecological)."

Correspondence ID: 33

Comment ID: 044

Comment Text: "Such designation will provide needed protection for the resource while supporting and reinforcing ongoing long-running local efforts to preserve this remarkably intact river, its watershed, coastal marshes, and ecosystem."

Correspondence ID: 35

Comment ID: 047

Comment Text: "I believe that designation will benefit the river by reminding us all what a treasure it is so that we will all continue to love, respect and care for the waters and the threats that can come from overuse as well as from a changing climate."

Correspondence ID: 36

Comment ID: 051

Comment Text: "I can state that the York River is a true gem. It has it all: beauty, natural resources that support recreation and commercial activities, diverse habitats, clean water, protected places, and a rich and long cultural history."

Correspondence ID:	37
Comment ID:	052
Comment Text:	"I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for National Park Service's York River Wild and Scenic River Study Report which confirms the eligibility of the York River for designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System as a partnership river. The report strongly makes the case that the York River is an extraordinary resource that is of national significance and truly deserves this distinguished status."
Correspondence ID:	38
Comment ID:	055
Comment Text:	"As a York, ME resident, and boater on the York River, I highly recommend designating the York River as a Wild and Scenic River. I strongly believe that it will benefit the local community and environment for years to come."
Correspondence ID:	40
Comment ID:	056
Comment Text:	"This is a unique record of an ongoing geomorphic process invaluable for future research, but only if there is no further land-use intrusion in the drainage basin. The wild and scenic designation will assure this for future study of an important environmental process as the river system responds to an increasing rate of sea level rise."
Correspondence ID:	42
Comment ID:	059
Comment Text:	"As a York resident and kayaker, I believe it will have great benefits for our town and river. As a biologist, I understand how the health of the river has a direct effect on the health of the people, plants and animals that live in the surrounding area. The York River is a vital resource to our community, and deserves this designation. By designating the river as a Wild and Scenic river, it's health will be protected for generations to come."
Correspondence ID:	44
Comment ID:	061
Comment Text:	"Within the most rapidly growing part of the State of Maine, the river's natural and historic resources have regional and national significance. Clean water supports many recreational uses and provides critical habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife. The working waterfront is vital to the economy and cultural landscape of the region. Watershed lands protect regional drinking water supplies."
Correspondence ID:	46
Comment ID:	062
Comment Text:	"After thorough study, I see this as an extremely important measure to protect the beautiful York River as well as provide additional resources to support that."
Correspondence ID:	50
Comment ID:	068
Comment Text:	"I look forward to your help in keeping the York River healthy, productive and beautiful for now and for future generations. Your making it a designation as a part of the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Program will do that."
Correspondence ID:	55
Comment ID:	076

Comment Text: "This will enable studies to better understand the river and threats, which will be invaluable to protect it for future generations. These projects will maintain the water quality, habitats and wildlife which is very important to us."

Correspondence ID: 59

Comment ID: 079

Comment Text: "This designation would continue a decades long progression of broad community supported efforts to recognize and protect the uniqueness of this watershed for recreation, water quality, drinking water, wildlife, fisheries and historic values allowing the surrounding region to continue to thrive."

Correspondence ID: 60

Comment ID: 081

Comment Text: "I fish for lobster year round as do our two adult sons. We are at the York River every day. My daughter sells retail at the dock and many people from all over the world visit our wharf. My family and I want to see the river designated into the Partnership Wild and Scenic program to see the river protected and water quality insured for future generations."

Correspondence ID: 61

Comment ID: 082

Comment Text: "With its vibrant fishing community, popular swimming spots, scenic views, and rich habitat for wildlife, the York River is fundamental to the character and natural landscape of the Southern Maine communities of York, Kittery, South Berwick and Eliot."

Concern Statement 2: **Commenters observed that the Study Committee and NPS provided broad and thorough outreach and education to landowners and others.**

Representative Quotes:

Correspondence ID: 2

Comment ID: 001

Comment Text: "With first-hand knowledge of the York River Study and the committee's work, I'm well aware of the extensive community outreach efforts that were part of this initiative, and I am happy to see that documented in your report, along with the community votes and extensive list of letters of support from so many community groups."

Correspondence ID: 4

Comment ID: 004

Comment Text: "The York River Wild & Scenic designation study committee spent years assessing the river in all its complexity and providing outreach to stakeholders. That outreach included contact with and mailings to property owners; dozens of well-advertised public meetings where anyone could question and/or offer their views; a constantly updated website detailing the activities of the study committee, and presenting the committee's report in draft form for input; televised presentations to municipal boards and civic groups; and additionally, ample, ongoing coverage in the local press."

Correspondence ID: 5

Comment ID: 005

Comment Text: "This decision was arrived after after [sic] ten years of public deliberations in living rooms, town fairs, Rotary Club meetings, Boards of Selectmen, Planning Boards, Conservation Commissions, Historical Societies, as well as monthly community forums at the public library."

Correspondence ID: 6

Comment ID: 006

Comment Text: "A small but vocal group of York residents has fought this designation, claiming the possibility of federal overreach and insufficient communication. There is absolutely no evidence of any federal overreach over any other rivers with this designation and, short of moving into the homes of the dissenters, communication has been deep and broad."

Correspondence ID: 27

Comment ID: 036

Comment Text: "The River study was well publicized and openly discussed at length with members of the community. The support is evident."

Correspondence ID: 35

Comment ID: 048

Comment Text: "To prepare for designation a committee of local people from all the towns in the watershed conducted a very comprehensive study of the York River. The committees meetings were always open to the public and I attended a couple. I was impressed with how knowledgeable the group was and how well the people from all the neighboring towns worked together and respected each others views."

Correspondence ID: 35

Comment ID: 049

Comment Text: "In York there had been quite a bit of negative publicity from a very small group of people who were very vocal and frequently spread inaccurate information. Some of them were landowners who frequently said they were left out of the process which was simply not so. But even with all the misinformation, there was strong support. It is clear; the people of these communities support designation."

Correspondence ID: 52

Comment ID: 072

Comment Text: "With respect to the process of creating the York River watershed stewardship plan and the Wild and Scenic study there was tremendous public out-reach and education resulting in overwhelming community support, favorable votes in York and Elliot and unanimous counsel support in Kittery and South Berwick."

Concern Statement 3: **Commenters highlighted the strong local support for Wild and Scenic River designation.**

Representative Quotes:

Correspondence ID: 10

Comment ID: 010

Comment Text: "Our town of York and the other three towns involved overwhelmingly supported this through our different voting systems. It is time to fulfill the will of the voters."

Correspondence ID:	16
Comment ID:	015
Comment Text:	"Residents of York favor York River's designation; this is clearly evidenced by the 63% vote in favor of designation."
Correspondence ID:	19
Comment ID:	019
Comment Text:	"The town vote in support of the Partnership Wild and Free River designation was overwhelmingly supportive, the local study effort inclusive and thoughtful."
Correspondence ID:	20
Comment ID:	020
Comment Text:	"The towns that would be impacted by this designation have shown overwhelming support for it in our local elections."
Correspondence ID:	23
Comment ID:	028
Comment Text:	"This designation has won a huge plurality of votes in York, Kittery and Berwick."
Correspondence ID:	33
Comment ID:	045
Comment Text:	"There is a strong support from conservation partners and town residents, and this support will help the York River Stewardship Plan move forward."
Correspondence ID:	34
Comment ID:	046
Comment Text:	"Additional support has been expressed, since the time NPS was initially compiling letters of support in early 2019. Most notably, the Maine State Legislature unanimously adopted HP 1509, a Joint Resolution Supporting the Designation of the York River and Its Major Tributaries as a Partnership Wild and Scenic River in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System."
Correspondence ID:	47
Comment ID:	063
Comment Text:	"Despite a very small but vocal opposition to the project, 60% of York voters approved the designation and stewardship plan. I hope the Park Service and Congress will respect the will of the residents of York and other [sic] adjacent communities."
Correspondence ID:	51
Comment ID:	069
Comment Text:	"There has already been overwhelming community support for designation including favorable votes in York (63% of voters) and Eliot (73% of voters) and unanimous council support in Kittery and South Berwick; support from boards and committees, conservation and historic organizations, and user groups."
Correspondence ID:	58
Comment ID:	078
Comment Text:	"The designation enjoys strong local support as well, with unanimous council support in my town of Kittery, as well as endorsement from numerous local boards and committees, conservation groups and historic organizations."

Concern Statement 4: Commenters reported that they understood what designation involved, and that it would not infringe upon the towns' or individuals' rights.

Representative Quotes:

Correspondence ID: 22

Comment ID: 025

Comment Text: "We understand that with designation, the resulting stewardship committee will recommend but not ordain with no infringement on Town authority."

Correspondence ID: 23

Comment ID: 029

Comment Text: "This designation will be good for the long term health of the York River, will enhance our enjoyment of the river without impacting any rights of the York landholders."

Correspondence ID: 28

Comment ID: 037

Comment Text: "This designation would in no way pave the way for federal overreach of private land, but, instead, would provide a structure and possible funds to maintain this pristine river for generations to come."

Correspondence ID: 29

Comment ID: 038

Comment Text: "I am a York River landowner... We love the river, understand the parameters for designation and obviously are in favor of designation so that the river, which belongs to all citizens of York, not just to those who live on its shores has the best chance of being properly stewarded in perpetuity."

Correspondence ID: 31

Comment ID: 040

Comment Text: "I can't think of any reasons not to support designation. Designation is NOT a threat to property rights or land use, if anything it would raise our property values."

Correspondence ID: 32

Comment ID: 042

Comment Text: "I am aware that the designation for the York River will in no way pose threat by the federal government to property rights of land use nor will designation change local towns' control and management of the river and its resources."

Correspondence ID: 35

Comment ID: 050

Comment Text: "We understand that this designation is not a threat to property rights and that land use decisions will continue to be made locally so that management and overall control of the river and its assets will remain with landowners and local government, where applicable."

Correspondence ID: 47

Comment ID: 064

Comment Text: "I have learned that the designation does not include any federal management or acquisition of lands, does not mandate any changes in land use regulation unless approved by town boards and citizens, nor does it impose any financial obligation on the participating towns."

Correspondence ID: 48

Comment ID: 065

Comment Text: "Wild and Scenic designation is not Washington DC or "big government" taking over control of the York River. This is a local effort, locally managed, which will leverage the honor of a national designation with the opportunity for strategic financial support. In my opinion, this is how government should work."

Correspondence ID: 52

Comment ID: 073

Comment Text: "I have heard that some people believe this is a threat to property rights or land-use but from my research I see that this designation will not change local control or management of our important river resources."

Correspondence ID: 59

Comment ID: 080

Comment Text: "The riverfront landowners understood that a healthy river was in their best interest and the importance of science in determining that health."

Concern Statement 5: **Commenters remarked about the benefits of a local-federal partnership, coordinated stewardship approach, and influx of federal funding.**

Representative Quotes:

Correspondence ID: 13

Comment ID: 014

Comment Text: "The Town also looks forward on formal designation to working collaboratively with the other three watershed communities on shared strategies to protect the watershed as we respond to growing development pressure."

Correspondence ID: 16

Comment ID: 016

Comment Text: "The federal funding that comes with designation will increase opportunities for grant funding to help maintain health of the river in terms of water quality and habitat."

Correspondence ID: 17

Comment ID: 017

Comment Text: "It will promote collaborative stewardship among the towns it goes through and provide federal funding for studies and planning. The river has important natural, historical, and archaeological resources in and along it that merit careful consideration and cooperation among these communities to manage effectively."

Correspondence ID: 20

Comment ID: 021

Comment Text: "This designation would be an important solidification of the efforts to improve coordination among the towns that are part of the watershed for better stewardship and help maintain the river's health and character for years to come."

Correspondence ID: 22

Comment ID: 026

Comment Text: "A consistent and coordinated approach to land management and protection by each of the watershed communities is important to development that also protects the river and [sic] its tributaries."

Correspondence ID: 31

Comment ID: 041

Comment Text: "I support this designation because it would bring annual federal funding, plus enhanced opportunities for grant funding and technical assistance, that will benefit our river and communities."

Correspondence ID: 32

Comment ID: 043

Comment Text: "Furthermore I am aware, as a result of the first river management study, the positive effect of the four local towns joining together with the awarded money to contract research specialists, as well as local volunteers, to collect valuable information and including endangered/threatened dependent species."

Correspondence ID: 37

Comment ID: 053

Comment Text: "I look forward to continuing work with local groups and towns to further advance efforts to protect the River. A designation of the River as A Wild and Scenic Partnership River will greatly bolster our joint efforts going forward."

Correspondence ID: 41

Comment ID: 057

Comment Text: "Designation will provide much needed funding to continue the work we started - - to help fund more studies and provide technical assistance, to continue to have open forums with our townspeople (in all four towns) to further understand priorities."

Correspondence ID: 43

Comment ID: 060

Comment Text: "A Wild & Scenic designation is very much needed to build the partnerships, which I believe will be essential to preserving many of the river's resources that we enjoy and appreciate today, and to make sure those resources are there for the next generation."

Correspondence ID: 48

Comment ID: 066

Comment Text: "From my experience, Wild and Scenic designation is the best balance of local and federal cooperation we could hope for."

Correspondence ID: 49

Comment ID: 067

Comment Text: "The Federal expertise that comes with Wild and Scenic designation is welcomed for both protecting and interpreting York's important historical and cultural sites."

Correspondence ID: 51

Comment ID: 070

Comment Text: "There is no question that a designation which would protect an ENTIRE watershed through the cooperation of several towns without impacting local use and access should be passed."

Correspondence ID: 54

Comment ID: 075

Comment Text: "It will help the towns, land trusts and other conservation groups within the watershed be able to coordinate stewardship of the river and a forum for community discussion and engagement of river related issues."

Correspondence ID: 57

Comment ID: 077

Comment Text: "I fully support designation of the York River into the nation's Wild & Scenic Rivers Program, for doing so will create a locally controlled advisory committee to work with the four towns along the river to develop, recommend and help implement policies and programs that will ensure that the river remains a fabulous wildlife habitat; that it continues to be pristine and beautiful, and that its historic resources are protected."

Concern Statement 6: **Commenters stated that the Study Report and Stewardship Plan accurately reflect the thorough work of the Wild and Scenic Study.**

Representative Quotes:

Correspondence ID: 2

Comment ID: 002

Comment Text: "With first-hand knowledge of the York River Study and the committee's work, I'm well aware of the extensive community outreach efforts that were part of this initiative, and I am happy to see that documented in your report, along with the community votes and extensive list of letters of support from so many community groups."

Correspondence ID: 37

Comment ID: 054

Comment Text: "The report strongly makes the case that the York River is an extraordinary resource that is of national significance and truly deserves this distinguished status."

Correspondence ID: 41

Comment ID: 058

Comment Text: "The National Park Service's report on the study, confirms that the river meets their requirements which is stated clearly in this report."

Correspondence ID: 51

Comment ID: 071

Comment Text: "I have followed the Wild and Scenic study since its inception and trust its results."

Correspondence ID: 52

Comment ID: 074

Comment Text: "In my view this is an excellent, well thought out and developed study and should be used to support the requested designation."

Correspondence ID: 61

Comment ID: 083

Comment Text: "I fully agree and support the National Park Service's findings outlined in their January 2020 York River Wild and Scenic Study Report. The findings and recommendations in the York River Watershed Stewardship Plan and the National Park Service York River Wild and Scenic Study Report reflect years of careful evaluation and study about the York River system as well as suitability and impacts of the proposed designation."

Table 6: Comments Against/Opposed to Wild and Scenic River Designation

PS2000	Public Sentiment: Unfavorable to Wild and Scenic River Designation
Issues/Concerns	
<p>Concern Statement 1:</p> <p>Representative Quotes:</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 7 Comment ID: 007 Comment Text: "From the beginning, the York River Study Committee displayed a near criminal lack of outreach to the riverfront, tributary and watershed property owners in York. In fact, there was no outreach by this committee to riverfront, tributary and watershed property owners at all, especially to York's last remaining riverfront farms, fisherman and recreational businesses. I know this to be fact because I personally spoke to the farmers and many of the rest."</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 9 Comment ID: 009 Comment Text: "If the proponents of the wild and scenic designation were so concerned in our slice of paradise, why did they not start by knocking on every landowners door?"</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 21 Comment ID: 022 Comment Text: "Another issue I have is that the owners along the river were not properly told what this study was all about and what could come. Yes, many meetings were held but as a land owner along the river we should of been so educated that this would of been not an issue at the end of the study. [. . . Landowners] that I had the privilege to talk to are mad and don't feel like they have a voice on this."</p>	<p>Commenters stated that the Study Committee and NPS provided inadequate outreach and education to riverfront landowners.</p>
<p>Concern Statement 2:</p> <p>Representative Quotes:</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 21 Comment ID: 023 Comment Text: "There are only so many people that this will impact moving forward. Town's people who don't own land on the river will not even understand how this will impact generations to come."</p>	<p>Commenters voiced concern about federal government overreach and involvement in local affairs.</p>
<p>Concern Statement 3:</p> <p>Representative Quotes:</p>	<p>Commenters expressed appreciation for the river and its benefits and stated that the river is cared for by riverfront landowners and already well protected; no additional protection is needed.</p>

<p>Correspondence ID: 21</p> <p>Comment ID: 024</p> <p>Comment Text:</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 25</p> <p>Comment ID: 030</p> <p>Comment Text:</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 25</p> <p>Comment ID: 031</p> <p>Comment Text:</p>	<p>"We feel like [designation] is not needed and don't want the park service's [sic] involved with our town. The river is clearly being treated how all river's [sic] should be treated in our state. If you own land on the York River you would understand that there is more laws and regulations on the people who live on the river that this is actually totally unnecessary and absurd."</p> <p>"We realize that we are truly blessed to be able to enjoy this town treasure and continually strive to keep it clean by pulling debris and garbage out of the river that come from the lower reaches of the river."</p> <p>"I strongly argue that this designation will offer no additional protection to the York River and will in fact adversely affect the water quality and the esthetic value of the river. The measures that are already in place adequately protect this river. This national designation will add an unnecessary layer of government."</p>
<p>Concern Statement 4:</p> <p>Representative Quotes:</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 25</p> <p>Comment ID: 032</p> <p>Comment Text:</p>	<p>Commenters stated that vocal opposition to designation was not accurately represented in the Study Report.</p> <p>"My family and I went to almost all the town meeting and there was a lot of opposition, which the report you have clearly does not mention."</p>
<p>Concern Statement 5:</p> <p>Representative Quotes:</p> <p>Correspondence ID: 25</p> <p>Comment ID: 033</p> <p>Comment Text:</p>	<p>Commenters expressed concern that designation will increase visitor use and negatively impact the river.</p> <p>"What this designation will do is attract more people to the upper reaches of the river which has no facilities to support users."</p>

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