

**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Hearing on HR 415, the Taunton Wild and Scenic River Act
Statement of Congressman Barney Frank**

October 25, 2007

Chairman Grijalva, Congressman Bishop and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for scheduling this hearing and allowing me to submit testimony on behalf of including the Taunton River in Massachusetts as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. I believe the Taunton River's extraordinary historic significance and scenic beauty deserve national recognition. This bill has the full support of all of the communities affected by it, and in fact the entire delegations of Massachusetts and Rhode Island have cosponsored my bill. There is a companion bill in the Senate cosponsored by Senators Kennedy and Kerry.

More than eight years ago, our late colleague, Congressman Joseph Moakley, initiated legislation to authorize a study to determine the merits of including the Taunton River in the Wild & Scenic program in 1999. In one of his final letters he wrote that:

"It is my hope that the study that will be conducted over the next three years will in fact determine that the Taunton River should be designated as a Wild and Scenic River. I cannot think of another river in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that captures the magnificence of New England better than the Taunton River."

President Clinton signed the study bill into law in 2000, and the Park Service began studying the merits of the Upper Taunton River for inclusion in the program. While that was the beginning of the study, local communities petitioned to include the lower portion of the Taunton River in the study. In September of 2002, my colleagues Congressmen James McGovern, Stephen Lynch, and I contacted the Park Service requesting that they include the lower portion of the Taunton River in the study. The Park Service accepted our request and our communities have been working diligently for years to plan for how best to protect and preserve the River and its watershed.

I have pointed out the timeline of these events because critics of my bill have suggested I offered this legislation as a roadblock for a proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility in my district. However, this assertion is completely inaccurate because our request to the Park Service occurred in September of 2002, while the announcement of the proposed LNG facility did not occur until early 2003. While I don't object to this added benefit, it was not the intention of my bill, and in fact the situation has been rendered moot because the Coast

Guard recently declared that the proposed LNG facility is unsuitable from a navigational safety perspective – in effect blocking the LNG project.

The Park Service completed the initial portion of the Taunton River Wild and Scenic Study last year, and the NPS has issued its draft report for public and agency comment. This draft report concluded that the Taunton River is eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation based upon free-flowing condition and the presence of outstandingly remarkable values including fisheries; history and archaeology; ecology and biodiversity; and scenery and recreation. The report also selected including the entire length of the Taunton River from the headwaters of the Taunton River at the confluence of the Town and Matfield Rivers to Mt. Hope Bay at the Braga Bridge in Fall River into the Scenic & Wild system as the “Environmentally Preferred Alternative,” which is exactly what my bill does.

Now we have the ability to finalize the impressive work of Congressman Moakley and the many volunteers in the cities and towns in the watershed who are leading the effort to protect this unique resource. So I hope that you will be able to act on this legislation and move it forward. Thank you again for this opportunity to submit testimony.