

Testimony of Richard Delaney

H. R. 182

U.S. House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

May 22, 2019

My name is Richard Delaney. I am the President of the Center for Coastal Studies, an independent, non-profit marine science research, education and policy organization. I also have the privilege to serve as Chair of the Cape Cod National Seashore Advisory Commission and am here today to urge your support for HR 182 a bill that would reauthorize the work of the Advisory Commission for an additional 10 years. This bill has profound importance for the future management of CCNS and its critical partnership and relationships with the six local towns within its boundary. Over its almost 60 years of operation; the Commission has provided the key forum for coordination and communication between the local communities and the NPS management and has been an outstanding example of a partnership in cooperative land stewardship in the National Park System

The CCNS Advisory Commission was authorized in 1961, as part of the Seashore's enabling legislation. As stated in Section 8, its purpose is "to provide a means of ongoing consultation and liaison with private, local, and community interests that were expected to remain within the seashore." Membership consists of one representative from each of the six Lower Cape Towns, two from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, one from Barnstable County, and one selected by the Secretary of the Interior.

Cape Cod National Seashore was established with a pattern of land ownership and management that is most unusual in the National Park System. The boundaries of Cape Cod National Seashore incorporated significant portions of the six lower Cape towns. However, the towns retained ownership of numerous parcels within the Seashore including ponds, beaches, parking lots and roads and over 600 parcels inside the Cape Cod National Seashore are privately owned. Activities on all these lands can have potentially profound effects on protected resources, and vice versa.

Consequently, there was intense political debate about and considerable local opposition to the original proposal to create CCNS. The need for a forum for open, constructive dialogue where the towns and private sector had a voice was solved by the establishment of the CCNS Advisory Commission; and that need continues today as new issues emerge and others reappear. It is fair to say that the CCNS Advisory Commission was one of the keys to the successful establishment of Cape Cod National Seashore.

Since that time, it has held over 300 publically conducted meetings and established an excellent reputation as a facilitator of vital public/private dialogue. We meet 6 or 7 times per year and occasionally create subcommittees dedicated to examining specific issues in more detail. Town representatives can bring any issue or concern to the attention of the Advisory Commission providing much valued direct access to park management. At the same time, it permits park management to involve and solicit input from the local towns on upcoming decisions and concerns at the federal level.

The CCNS Advisory Commission has helped many CCNS Superintendents deal with important issues such as ORV use on the beaches, locations of bicycle trails, land exchanges, hunting EIS, development pressures, dune shack management in Provincetown and solid waste management. In virtually, every case, the advice and recommendations from the towns via the Advisory Commission has resulted in a well-reasoned outcome acceptable to all parties.

One major concern at the outset was how and to what degree commercial ventures would be allowed within the CCNS boundaries. Local officials worried about rampart commercialization and just plain competition with existing businesses that support the towns. I have served on the Commission in various appointments for over 20 years, and this issue is no longer of concern as there are only 8 pre-existing commercial permits allowed within the CCNS and they are reviewed and routinely continued by the Advisory Commission every 5 or 10 years. In fact, the existence of CCNS and its 4 million annual visitors, has provided the backbone of much of the lower Cape economy.

The cost of operating the Advisory Commission is negligible. All members serve voluntarily and take no expense reimbursement. The CCNS costs include listing meetings in the Federal Register, court reporter, GPO publication of meeting minutes and staff support. It is abundantly clear that modest, approximate \$7,000 cost for the annual operation of the Advisory Commission pays invaluable dividends and assures the smooth operation of the CCNS.

I can assure the Subcommittee, that the Advisory Commission has the full support of all six towns and all sectors of the community including private businesses and home owners. On their behalf and as Chair of the Advisory Committee, I ask that you approve H.R 182 and support its prompt passage.

Thank you very much,

Richard Delaney