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SENATE

{ REPORT
110-157

CHATTAHOOCHEE TRACE NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR STUDY ACT OF 2007

SEPTEMBER 17, 2007.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. BINGAMAN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural
Resources, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany S. 637]

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, to which was referred the bill (S. 637) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor in Alabama and Georgia, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with amendments and recommends that the bill, as amended, do pass.

The amendments are as follows:

1. Beginning on page 2, strike line 15 and all that follows through page 4, line 7, and insert the following:

“(b) STUDY AREA.—The study area includes—

“(1) the portion of the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin and surrounding areas, as generally depicted on the map entitled ‘Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor, Alabama/Georgia’, number T05/80000, and dated July 2007; and

“(2) any other areas in the State of Alabama or Georgia that—

“(A) have heritage aspects that are similar to the areas depicted on the map described in paragraph (1); and

“(B) are adjacent to, or in the vicinity of, those areas.”

2. On page 6, line 8, insert “Natural” before “Resources”.

PURPOSE

The purpose of S. 637 is to direct the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with appropriate State governmental entities, to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor in Alabama and Georgia.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

The Chattahoochee Trace has an abundance of cultural, natural, recreational, and scenic resources. Much of the area's history revolves around the Chattahoochee River, which has long served as a food source, transportation route, and an engine for commerce. An abundance of prehistoric archaeological sites are evidence of human habitation along the banks of the Chattahoochee River and its tributaries dating back thousands of years. From approximately 350 to 600 A.D., Kolomoki, near the present day town of Blakely, was one of the most populous settlements north of Mexico.

In 1689, Spanish monks and soldiers built the mission and fort of Apalachicola on the west bank of the Chattahoochee River, in present day Russell County, Alabama, about fifteen miles south of Columbus, Georgia. In the early eighteenth century, merchants from French Louisiana began trading with the Native Americans in the lower Chattahoochee Valley, ushering in an era of great economic activity, including cotton plantations, textile mills, and riverboat companies.

In the twentieth century, hydroelectric power emerged as an important industry in the lower Chattahoochee Valley. By the 1920s, dams on the Chattahoochee River near Columbus were providing electricity to thousands of customers, and the area quickly came to be recognized for its role in power generation. One turbine at the Eagle and Phenix Mills powerhouse, installed in 1898, still produces electricity today.

In the twentieth century, the creation of large lakes along the river further enhanced the Chattahoochee River's recreational opportunities. For example, Lake Eufaula, near Fort Gaines, Georgia, features 640 miles of shoreline. Last year, the lake attracted approximately 4.5 million visitors that engaged in such popular activities as swimming, camping, hunting, boating, and trophy fishing. The lake is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and features several adjacent protected lands, including the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Lakepoint State Park in Alabama, and Florence Marina and George T. Bagby State Parks in Georgia.

The study authorized by S. 637 will help assess the appropriateness of encompassing these resources within a national heritage corridor designation.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

S. 637 was introduced by Senator Sessions on February 15, 2007. The Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on the bill on March 20, 2007 (S. Hrg. 110-73).

At its business meeting on July 25, 2007, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered S. 637 favorably reported, with amendments.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in open business session on July 25, 2007, by a voice vote of a quorum present, recommends that the Senate pass S. 637, if amended as described herein.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

During its consideration of S. 637, the Committee adopted two amendments. The first amendment replaces a lengthy description of the counties and communities within the proposed study area with a reference to a map identifying the study area. The second amendment makes a technical correction.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 contains the short title, the "Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor Study Act of 2007."

Section 2 defines key terms used in the bill.

Section 3(a) directs the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with various State historical and tourism entities, to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating the study areas as a National Heritage Corridor.

Subsection (b) references a map that identifies the proposed study area. Also included within the study area are other areas in Alabama and Georgia near the study area that have similar heritage aspects.

Subsection (c) identifies the requirements for the study. The study is to include analysis, documentation, and a determination whether the study area has an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that represent distinctive aspects of the heritage of the United States, in addition to several other criteria listed in the subsection.

Section 4 requires the Secretary of the Interior to submit a report to Congress within three fiscal years after funds are made available for the study, describing the findings of the study and any conclusions and recommendations.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

The following estimate of costs of this measure has been provided by the Congressional Budget Office:

JULY 31, 2007.

Hon. JEFF BINGAMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for S. 637, the Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor Study Act of 2007.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Tyler Kruzich.

Sincerely,

PETER R. ORSZAG.

Enclosure.

S. 637—Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor Study Act of 2007

S. 637 would direct the Department of the Interior (DOI) to conduct a study to assess the suitability and feasibility of designating as the Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor lands in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin within the states of Alabama and Georgia. Based on information from DOI, CBO estimates that implementing S. 637 would cost less than \$500,000 over the 2008–2010 period, assuming the availability of appropriated funds. Enacting the legislation would not affect direct spending or revenues.

S. 637 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Tyler Kruzich and David Reynolds. The estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT EVALUATION

In compliance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee makes the following evaluation of the regulatory impact which would be incurred in carrying out S. 637. The bill is not a regulatory measure in the sense of imposing Government-established standards or significant economic responsibilities on private individuals and businesses.

No personal information would be collected in administering the program. Therefore, there would be no impact on personal privacy.

Little, if any, additional paperwork would result from the enactment of S. 637, as ordered reported.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The testimony provided by the Department of the Interior at the March 20, 2007, Subcommittee hearing on S. 637 follows:

STATEMENT OF DANIEL N. WENK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Department of the Interior's views on S. 637, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor in the states of Alabama and Georgia.

The Department supports enactment of S. 637. Last year, the Administration sent to Congress a legislative proposal to establish guidelines and a process for designation. Bills were introduced in the 109th Congress (S. 243, H.R. 760 and H.R. 6287) that incorporated the majority of the provisions of the Administration's proposal, and S. 243 passed the Senate. During the 110th Congress, a similar heritage area program bill, S. 278, has been introduced, and we look forward to continuing to work with Congress on this very important issue.

With 37 national heritage areas designated across 27 states, and more heritage area legislative proposals in the pipeline, the Administration believes it is critical at this juncture for Congress to enact national heritage area program legislation. This legislation would provide a much-needed framework for evaluating proposed national heritage areas, offering guidelines for successful planning and management, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties, and standardizing timeframes and funding for designated areas. Program legislation also would clarify the expectation that heritage areas would work toward self-sufficiency by outlining the necessary steps, including appropriate planning, to achieve that shared goal.

The study would focus on an area known as the Chattahoochee Trace, which lies in the lower Chattahoochee Valley in the states of Alabama and Georgia. This area includes eighteen counties, seven in Alabama and eleven in Georgia, which are located near or adjacent to the Chattahoochee River in the lower halves of the two states. The Chattahoochee Trace has an abundance of cultural, natural, recreational, and scenic resources. Much of the area's history revolves around the Chattahoochee River, which has long served as a food source, transportation route, and an engine for commerce. Centuries before the arrival of European settlers, the lower Chattahoochee Valley was inhabited by Native Americans that relied on the river for everyday life. The abundance of prehistoric archaeological sites indicates that humans lived along the banks of the river and its tributaries dating back thousands of years. From approximately 350 to 600 A.D., Kolomoki, near the present day town of Blakely, was one of the most populous settlements north of Mexico. Today, the seven mounds at Kolomoki are one of the impressive archeological sites that reflect upon the Chattahoochee Trace's ancient past.

The area is layered with many other facets of American history. In the late seventeenth century Spanish monks built the mission and fort of Apalachicola on the west bank of the Chattahoochee River, in present day Russell County, Alabama, about fifteen miles south of Columbus, Georgia. In the early eighteenth century, merchants from French Louisiana began trading with the Native Americans in the lower Chattahoochee Valley, ushering in an era of great economic activity. In the years that followed, commercial enterprises flourished, including cotton plantations, textile mills, and riverboat companies. In the antebellum period, the river-borne cotton trade led to the emergence of a prosperous agricultural economy that was, regrettably, dependent on slave labor for its growth. During this era, the river served as the lower Chattahoochee Valley's outlet to the world, connecting the plantations in the region with the international cotton market via New Orleans and ultimately Liverpool, England.

Heading into the twentieth century, hydroelectric power, which was first used in Columbus in 1882, emerged as an important industry in the lower Chattahoochee Valley. By

the 1920s, dams on the Chattahoochee River near Columbus were providing electricity to thousands of customers, and the area quickly came to be recognized for its role in power generation. Columbus was so well-known for its hydroelectricity industry that it was dubbed the “electric city” in the early 1900s. One turbine at the Eagle and Phenix Mills powerhouse, installed in 1898, still produces electricity today.

The scenic beauty of the river has been showcased in such places as Columbus and Phenix City, Alabama, where recent redevelopment projects have emphasized a re-orientation towards the river. A significant period of urban renewal and revitalization began in the mid 1990s and continues today. With these improvements, residents and businesses began moving back to formerly blighted areas. Examples of such municipal projects include the construction of the Columbus Riverwalk Park, the new Port Columbus Civil War Naval Museum, and the initial implementation of Phenix City’s riverfront revitalization plan.

Swimming, fishing, scenic drives, and strolls on the riverbank are just a few of the many recreational activities available to visitors to the Chattahoochee Trace. In the twentieth century, the creation of large lakes along the river further enhanced the Chattahoochee River’s recreational opportunities. For example, Lake Eufaula, near Fort Gaines, Georgia, features 640 miles of shoreline. Last year, the lake attracted approximately 4.5 million visitors that engaged in such popular activities as camping, hunting, boating, and trophy fishing. The lake is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and features several adjacent protected lands, including the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, Lakepoint State Park in Alabama, and Florence Marina and George T. Bagby State Parks in Georgia.

Since 1970, the Historic Chattahoochee Commission (Commission) has been responsible for administering a variety of programs throughout the Chattahoochee Trace. For the first eight years of its existence, the Commission operated as an agency of the State of Alabama. In 1978, the Georgia General Assembly and the Alabama Legislature passed identical legislation to establish an interstate compact for operation of the Commission. Among its many functions, the Commission is responsible for promoting tourism, historic preservation, and recreational development throughout the Chattahoochee Trace. Through the years the Commission has undertaken a number of important projects to further its goals, including a historical markers program, development of theme-based tours, a photographic folk life project, production of educational materials, historical architectural surveys, and the distribution of preservation grants.

The study that would be conducted under S. 637 is estimated to cost between \$200,000 and \$300,000. Mr. Chairman that concludes my testimony. I will be pleased to an-

swer any questions you or other members of the committee may have.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee notes that no changes in existing law are made by the bill S. 637, as ordered reported.

