

**Testimony**  
**House Natural Resources Committee Public Lands Subcommittee**  
**Congresswoman Chellie Pingree**  
**H.R. 1248 York River Wild and Scenic River Designation Act**  
**May 21, 2019**

Thank you Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Young and Members of the Subcommittee for allowing me to testify today in support of my bill, H.R. 1248, the York River Wild and Scenic River Designation Act.

I also want to welcome a fellow Mainer, Charles “Chuck” Ott, who you will hear from later today after the Members of Congress all finish pontificating...

Chuck is the Chair of the York River Study Committee. I want to thank him, Paul Dest, who is the Executive Director of the Wells Reserve, and Jennifer Hunter the York River Study Coordinator, as well as so many other Mainers who have worked tirelessly on this effort.

This legislation is the result of a decade of advocacy by constituents and live in the four towns in the watershed area—York, Eliot, Kittery and South Berwick—and who care deeply about the York River.

The Friends of the York River began the efforts leading toward designation as far back as 2008.

Six years ago, I introduced legislation to fund a study of the York River.

And five years ago, the House passed my bill to fund a study of the York River.

The York River Study Committee determined the river was eligible to be in the partnership river program.

The four watershed communities held votes or Town Council endorsements in the fall to show their support on the designation.

Now, we’re here after years of work, asking for the designation to actually take place.

I've heard from dozens of small business owners, community groups, elected officials from the state and local level, members of our fishing community, our sportsmen, and conservationists.

It is quite heartening to hear from such a diverse range of stakeholders who all agree that this designation will universally benefit them.

Since you may not have had the pleasure of visiting the York River, I want to tell you what makes it so special.

Its salt marshes serve as a nursery ground for nearly 30 species of fish that are vital to the Gulf of Maine ecosystem.

It has historical significance as the site of our Native American Tribes in Maine for hundreds of years and to some of the first English settlers from the 1600's.

And now, it's a working waterfront for farmers, shellfish harvesters, and fishermen.

My bill is the final step in a designation process that will protect this river for generations of Mainers to come, and to ensure that this working waterfront remains vibrant.

As rivers like York are affected by sea level rise, extreme weather events, and other drastic changes, a Wild and Scenic designation will allow us to monitor these changes and share data with federal stewards of similar waterbodies.

This National System of Wild and Scenic Rivers protects over 13,000 miles of rivers in the US, but as it stands, only one of them is in Maine. We're eager to double that number with today's bill and bring the York River into the program.

I want to thank my colleagues in the Maine delegation, especially Congressman Jared Golden who although new to this Congress was an early supporter of this bill.

And to thank the Chair for this hearing today .

I look forward to this hearing and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill as it moves forward.

Thank you.