

Congressman Jim Himes  
Connecticut's Fourth Congressional District

**Statement for the Record**  
**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands**  
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I want to thank Chairwoman Haaland, the Ranking Member, and the Members of this panel for coming together today to discuss an important part of New England's National Park System: Weir Farm National Historic Site.

As you know, the mission of the National Park Service is to protect and preserve our public lands and national treasures for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. In 1990, Congress took the first step of recognizing and extending protections to one of these cultural landmarks, Weir Farm.

The legislation that established the Historic Site focused primarily on the core parcel of land that included the Weir House – the home of Julian Alden Weir, a pioneer in American impressionism. However, since its designation as a National Historic Site, Weir Farm has evolved to do much more than just honor the life and work of its namesake.

The park, which now stretches across nearly 70 acres of land, is home to 16 historic buildings, a vast collection of American art, orchards and landscapes, trails, gardens, miles of stone walls, Weir's Pond, and over 250 historic painting sites. As a part of the Northeast Temperate Network, the team at Weir Farm monitors, analyzes, and shares information about the area's climate, water quality, forest health, and more with other parks in the region.

Weir Farm National Historic Site also works closely with partner organizations, including Friends of Weir Farm National Historic Site, to develop innovative programs and attract new visitors. Youth-organizations like Groundwork Bridgeport have partnered with Weir Farm to provide young people an opportunity to volunteer, perform service projects, or practice their craft at the park. Since 1998, Weir Farm Art Alliance, a non-profit organization that works in tandem with the park, has honored the site's history by offering a rich Artist-in-Residence program that allows artists from across the globe to spend one month living and working at the park.

Since its designation as a Historic Site, many of the park's landscapes and resources have been rehabilitated and restored to their original state, which inspired artists like Julian Alden Weir, Mahonri Mackintosh Young, and Charles Sperry Andrews to produce their finest works. Weir Farm will garner even more attention in 2020, as the park is featured on the U.S. Mint's America the Beautiful Quarter, representing the State of Connecticut. Put simply, the park's current nomenclature does not capture the complexity and scope of the site.

Madam Chairwoman, changing this designation is the right thing to do, and it's the right time to do it. Walking through Weir Farm in any season is a quintessentially Connecticut experience, and now, with its extensive grounds and programmatic offerings, it deserves full consideration as a National Historical Park. I appreciate your attention to this bill.