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METACOMET-MONADNOCK-MATTABESETT TRAIL STUDY ACT OF 2001

SEPTEMBER 9, 2002.—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 H.R. 1814]

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, to which was referred the Act (H.R. 1814) to amend the National Trails System Act to designate the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail extending through western Massachusetts and central Connecticut for study for potential addition to the National Trails System, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the Act do pass.

PURPOSE

The purpose of H.R. 1814 is to amend the National Trails System Act to study the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail, a system of trails and potential trails extending southward approximately 180 miles through western Massachusetts and central Connecticut, for potential addition to the National Trails System

BACKGROUND AND NEED

H.R. 1814 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to study the feasibility of designating existing and proposed segments of a 250-mile trail in New England as part of the National Trails System.

The proposed “Metacomet-Monadnock-Sunapee-Mattabesett Trail” would connect existing portions of the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail, and would travel in a north-south direction through western New Hampshire, western Massachusetts, and central Connecticut. The trail would stretch from a location near Mount Cube in Grafton County, New Hampshire, to Long Island Sound east of New Haven, Connecticut. The proposed trail would largely follow exist-

ing trails, uniting the Monadnock-Sunapee-Greenway Trail in New Hampshire, with the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and the Mattabesett Trail in Connecticut. Several additional trail segments would need to be developed to complete the various components, the longest being in New Hampshire connecting the Appalachian Trail to the top of Mount Sunapee, and in Connecticut linking the Mattabesett Trail to Long Island Sound.

At this time, only 25 percent of the land underlying the proposed trail is publicly owned, while the remaining lands are privately owned. Current arrangements with landowners allow the trail to cross private land. If the trail is designated part of the National Trail System, the National Park Service would need to secure new agreements to continue public access across these lands.

The proposed trail would provide hiking and recreational opportunities within a heavily populated region. Secretary Norton designated two sections of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail as a national recreation trail in recognition of the outstanding scenic features, geological formations, and natural and cultural resources located along the trail.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

H.R. 1814 was introduced by Representative Olver on May 10, 2001. The House of Representatives passed the bill by a voice vote on October 23, 2001. A companion measure, S. 1609, was introduced by Senators Kerry, Kennedy, Lieberman, and Dodd on November 1, 2001. The Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on H.R. 1814 and S. 1609 on June 20, 2002. At the business meeting on July 31, 2002, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered H.R. 1814 favorably reported.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in open business session on July 31, 2002, by a voice vote of a quorum present, recommends that the Senate pass H.R. 1814.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 designates the bill's title as "Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail Study Act of 2001."

Section 2 designates the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail for study for potential addition to the National Trails System.

Section 3 directs the Secretary of the Interior to submit the study to Congress not later than 2 years after enactment of the legislation, notwithstanding the 3-year time frame set forth in section 5(b) of the National Trails System Act.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

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

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, August 8, 2002.

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 H.R. 1814, the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail Study Act of 2001.

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

Sincerely,

BARRY B. ANDERSON
(For Dan L. Crippen, Director).

Enclosure.

H.R. 1814—Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail Study Act of 2001

H.R. 1814 would amend the National Trails System Act to add a network of trails in the northeastern United States to the list of routes to be studied for possible inclusion in the National Trails System. The Secretary of the Interior would have two years to conduct a study of the 180-mile Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail system in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Based on information provided by the National Park Service and assuming appropriation of the necessary amount, CBO estimates that it would cost the federal government \$270,000 over the next two years to conduct the required study and report to the Congress on its findings. H.R. 1814 would not affect direct spending or receipts; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply. The legislation 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.

On September 21, 2001, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 1814 as ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on September 12, 2001. The two versions of the legislation are identical, as are the cost estimates.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Deborah Reis. 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 H.R. 1814. 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 H.R. 1814, as ordered reported.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

The pertinent legislative report received by the Committee from the Department of the Interior setting forth Executive agency recommendations relating to H.R. 1814 is set forth below:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, DC, July 25, 2002.

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

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This letter sets forth the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 1609 and H.R. 1814, Metacomet-Monadnock-Matabesett Trail Study Act of 2001.

The Department supports this study, with a technical amendment noted at the end of this letter. However, we did not request additional funding for this study in fiscal year 2003. We believe that any funding requested should be directed towards completing previously authorized studies. There are 34 studies pending currently, of which we hope to transmit at least four to Congress by the end of 2002. To meet the President's Initiative to eliminate the deferred maintenance backlog, we must continue to focus our resources on caring for existing areas in the National Park System. We caution that our support of this legislation authorizing a study does not necessarily mean that the Department will support designations of these segments as additions to the National Trails System.

The purpose of both bills is to conduct a study to determine the suitability for inclusion in the National Trails System of this 180-mile extended trail, which could eventually connect the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Western Massachusetts with Long Island Sound in Connecticut. The Trail would largely follow existing trails linking the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts and Connecticut, to the Matabesett Trail in Connecticut. New trail sections would need to be developed in Connecticut linking the Matabesett Trail to Long Island Sound. Other shorter gaps would also be filed. The great majority of this trail is located on private land. Outside of sections of trail on state lands, the trail currently is permitted to cross private land through a variety of agreements with the landowners. As part of this study, these agreements should be examined to ensure that the National Park Service works cooperatively with private landowners in an effort to continue public access across these private lands if the trail is designated.

Although the region was heavily traveled by Native Americans, for whom the trails have been named, it is not an historic route. Each section was conceived and built by local trail enthusiasts and much of the work was initiated in the late 1950's. The Connecticut Forest and Park Association has been the primary steward of the Matabesett Trail and the Connecticut portion of the Metacomet Trail. The Appalachian Mountain Club, through its Berkshire Chapter, has picked up the responsibility for the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts. Organized volunteers provide the management and maintenance for each trail segment. If the trail

was designated as part of the National Trails System, then existing trail clubs would be given the opportunity to assume a leadership role in working with landowners and communities to address any concerns they may have.

The existing sections of this proposed trail have similar scenic and recreational characteristics to the segments of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The trails provide for a rare opportunity for multi-day, overnight hiking trips in highly populated Connecticut and Massachusetts. In Connecticut and Massachusetts, the state governments and well-established trails organizations have made substantial commitments to the existing trail sections. Our experience with other national scenic and historic trails shows that trail clubs can and should assume a leadership role in working with landowners and communities, addressing their concerns to make their trails successful. The opportunity for good partnering exists in both states and is worthy of further exploration.

In June 2001, Secretary Gale Norton designated two sections of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail as a national recreation trail, recognizing the outstanding scenic features, geological formations, and natural and cultural resources along the route. There are well over 800 national recreation trails in the National Trails System. The designation as a national trail proposed in S. 1609 and H.R. 1814 would, if successful, provide more extensive Federal involvement, through the authorities of the National Trails System Act for this chain of trails.

The National Park Service supports this proposed study, as the existing trail segments possess many of the characteristics required of a national scenic trail. Only through further investigation will it be possible to determine if it is feasible and suitable for inclusion in the National Trails System. Furthermore, in order to better plan for the future of our national parks, we believe that any such studies should carefully examine the full life cycle operation and maintenance costs that would result from each alternative considered.

If this legislation is enacted and funds are available, the National Park Service would launch a study of the existing and proposed trails segments to evaluate the support for the trail, the impacts of federal involvement on the communities and private property it passes through, and the resources that would be opened for public use. The study would take approximately three years to complete and would, at a minimum, follow the requirements listed in section 5(b) of the National Trails System Act. Through this process, the National Park Service looks forward to working with and hearing the valuable input of the hundreds of communities that these trails cross in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The long title of S. 1609 refers to conducting a study on the feasibility of designating the Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail as a national historic trail. We would like to clarify that this trail has the potential to be a national scenic trail, instead of a national historic trail, and recommend amending the long title accordingly.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the presentation of this report from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

CRAIG MANSON,
Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, changes in existing law made by the Act H.R. 1814, as ordered reported, are shown as follows (existing law proposed to be omitted is enclosed in black brackets, new matter is printed in italic, existing law in which no change is proposed is shown in roman):

A. NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT

(Public Law 90-543; Approved October 2, 1968)

AN ACT To establish a national trails system, and for other purposes

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SHORT TITLE

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the "National Trails System Act".

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NATIONAL SCENIC AND NATIONAL HISTORICAL TRAILS

SEC. 5. (a) National scenic and national historic trails shall be authorized and designated only by Act of Congress. There are hereby established the following National Scenic and National Historic Trails:

* * * * *

(c) The following routes shall be studied in accordance with the objectives outlined in subsection (b) of this section:

* * * * *

(39) * * *

() *METACOMET-MONADNOCK-MATTABESSETT TRAIL.—The Metacomet-Monadnock-Mattabesett Trail, a system of trails and potential trails extending southward approximately 180 miles through western Massachusetts on the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, across central Connecticut on the Metacomet Trail and the Mattabesett Trail, and ending at Long Island Sound.*

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