

As an avid sportsman and outdoorsman I am very glad to have an opportunity to work to improve and preserve those special places for today's visitors and future generations. As I'm sure you are aware, the Commonwealth of Virginia and the First Congressional District are home to many historic places and natural attractions.

Last week with my support the House of Representatives passed S. 2739, the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008, a significant measure that would preserve and protect many important natural and cultural resources. This bill included 61 measures related to public lands, water, parks and heritage area designations from Virginia to Alaska. I would like to mention one of the areas close to home.

A portion of the bill that the President is expected to sign would establish The Journey through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area. This heritage designation would coordinate and link together historic sites within Virginia, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. The Virginia portion would include parts of Loudoun, Prince William, Fauquier, Spotsylvania, Madison, Culpepper, Rappahannock, Orange, and Albemarle Counties. The designation would assist in promoting historic sites, cultural and recreational tourism, highlighting the region's important role throughout American history from the Native Americans to the Civil War. National Heritage Area designations help foster coordination between state, local and federal partners to preserve and promote a region's unique historic legacy.

Also, last week the House Committee on Natural Resources, of which I am a member, considered and passed a measure supporting the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. The Committee favorably reported legislation authored by Representative John Sarbanes of Maryland that I cosponsored to permanently authorize the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. The Gateways Network links together well over 100 parks, museums, trails, wildlife refuges and much more into a comprehensive system that connects visitors with the natural beauty, rich history and recreational opportunities within the Bay watershed.

One important component of the Gateways Network is the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. This, the nation's first national watertrail, designated in December of 2006 traces the historic voyages of Smith's exploration of the Chesapeake Bay in the early 1600s. I am grateful for the work of my predecessor Congresswoman Jo Ann Davis, for her leadership in establishing this watertrail as a lasting legacy to the Bay's historical significance.

Also last week, we paused to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the birthday of James Monroe who was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia. I was honored to speak at the James Monroe Birthplace on the 26th of April. Monroe was born on April 28, 1758, and was raised and educated in the Commonwealth of Virginia. He attended the College of William and Mary, fought as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Continental Army, and practiced law in Fredericksburg. As a politician, Monroe served in the Virginia Assembly, the Continental Congress, as Governor to the Commonwealth of Virginia, as a US Senator, Secretary of State and Secretary of War to President James Madison. Ultimately, James Monroe became the fifth President of the United States. James Monroe was a loyal public servant and an exceptional statesman. His ideals and leadership qualities are such that all citizens, not only of Virginia, but the United States can admire and learn from.

Although these are just a few of the many historic treasures in Virginia's First Congressional District, I am honored to work with my colleagues in the House of Representatives to ensure that they are preserved and maintained for future generations to enjoy.