



July 19, 2011

To Senators Lautenberg and Menendez
Congressmen Andrews, LoBiondo, Runyan, Smith, Pallone, Holt and Sires

Re: National Park Service Oversight of NJ Coastal Heritage Trail

We, the undersigned members of the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition (SJBC), request you take action to extend the National Park Service's (NPS) oversight of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route's program, which is currently scheduled to sunset September 30, 2011.

The mission of the 19-member SJBC is to preserve the cultural heritage and environmental integrity of the South Jersey Bayshore. The Coalition works to build state and local awareness and appreciation of the South Jersey Bayshore region, leading to protection of the region.

SJBC is currently in the early stages of the Corridor Management Planning phase of the Bayshore Heritage Byway, the 122-mile route of which overlaps the Bayshore portion of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route (NJCHTR) in Salem, Cumberland and Cape May Counties. Once planned, funded and executed, the Bayshore Heritage Byway will include in its visitor program many of the interpretative resources from the NJCHTR. If experienced staff is maintained at the NJCHTR office there can be continuity in interpreting the unique cultural and natural attributes of the Bayshore Heritage Byway. Without the guidance of the NJCHTR staff, we fear a great deal of time will be spent reassembling and interpreting that which is already assembled. SJBC intends to see the Bayshore Heritage Byway project to fruition in a management capacity, while simultaneously pursuing a National Heritage Area designation for the region. The National Park Service is invaluable in providing expertise in that initiative as well.

However, it will be years before the Bayshore Heritage Byway is documented and destinations marked with signs and interpretive displays. In the meantime, the Coastal Heritage Trail can provide a meaningful foundation for exploration and tourism, at no cost to the State of New Jersey. It also represents a priceless collection of historical information and documentation about southern New Jersey. The SJBC has come to rely upon the expertise provided by Trail Manager Phil Correll and the staff of the NPS office in Fortescue on a number of issues, especially related to the history of the region. The NJ Coastal Heritage Trail Route staff are

valued members of our community and important advisors to the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition.

It is our understanding a number of transitional options for the NJCHTR are being explored. We believe the best option, and the one you should support, is to extend the funding for the NJCHTR for an additional 2-3 years, to allow for a transition in which the Bayshore Heritage Byway has taken full advantage of the knowledge and expertise amassed at the NJ Coastal Heritage Trail Route office.

While our interest is in the Bayshore section of the NJCHTR, we hope other organizations step up to support the Trail along the Atlantic coast of New Jersey.

To our knowledge, the NJCHTR is funded in the current version of the Federal Budget. However, without Congressional action in the form of introducing Authorization of the NJCHTR, the sunset clause will take effect September 30th, and an invaluable resource to southern New Jersey will languish.

Sincerely,

Sandy Batty, Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)

Lillian Armstrong, Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, Inc.

Matt Blake, American Littoral Society

Christine Nolan, South Jersey Land and Water Trust

Lucy Vandenberg, Plan Smart NJ

Margaret O'Gorman, Conserve Wildlife NJ

Dorina Frizzera, NJDEP, Office of Coastal Management

James Schulte, Preservation Salem County

Cindy Zirkle, Cohansey Area River Preservation

Richard McNutt, Tidewaters Gateway Partnership, Inc.