

TESTIMONY OF DON CROOK,
PRESIDENT OF WASHINGTON WATER TRAILS ASSOCIATION

On HR 1641 The Cascadia Marine Trail Study Act

Committee on Natural Resources- Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands

May 14th, 2009

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

My name is Don Crook and I am the President of the Washington Water Trails Association. I am here today to support HR 1641, The Cascadia Marine Trail Study Act. The Cascadia Marine Trail is an award-winning water trail on the shores of the nation's second largest estuary, Puget Sound.

WASHINGTON WATER TRAILS ASSOCIATION

Washington Water Trails Association (WWTA) is a small, member-driven non-profit comprised of over 1,200 committed individuals who realize that the rapid urbanization and privatization of shoreline limits public access and profoundly changes the pristine nature of Washington's waters and shores. The mission of WWTA is to establish access, recreation and educational opportunities in an environmentally sensitive manner for users of human and wind-powered, beachable water craft on the marine and inland waterways of Washington State.

THE CASCADIA MARINE WATER TRAIL

In 1993, WWTA successfully piloted a water trail bill through the Washington Legislature and opened the Cascadia Marine Trail with 20 campsites. The Cascadia Marine Trail, which extends the length of the Puget Sound and includes the San Juan Islands, is now an award winning National Recreation Trail with over 55 campsites and dozens of launching/landing areas. Work continues on the Cascadia Marine Trail, to meet the goal of campsites every 5-10 miles. In 2007-2008, three new campsites were added, another re-opened, and planning took place for a handful of potential sites to be opened in 2009.

PARTNERS

WWTA partners with more than twelve local, state and federal land resource agencies to provide primitive camping opportunities for non-motorized boaters on the Cascadia Marine Trail. More than half of the sites on the Cascadia Marine Trail are supported by the Washington State Parks.

VISION

More people are paddling the waters of Puget Sound each year. The Washington State Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation predicts that over the next 10 years, participation in paddling sports will increase by 21% in Washington State. National Scenic Trails promote the preservation of public access to and travel within the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the United States. With this increase in canoe and kayak users in Puget Sound the Cascadia Marine Trail is prime candidate for becoming a National Scenic Trail. National recognition will help the increasing need for distribution of information on public access, trail locations and routes, and low-impact recreation.

VOLUNTEERS/STEWARDSHIP

WWTA has conducted successful on-the-ground restoration work projects on the Cascadia Marine Trail. WWTA utilizes a network of over 50 trained volunteer site stewards for the Cascadia Marine Trail, who inform WWTA of degraded shoreline campsites and access points in need of restoration work. Using the information provided by volunteer site stewards, WWTA staff are able to implement successful site restoration projects by working closely with land managers and volunteer work parties, made up of individuals from the general public, youth groups, recreational clubs, and civic organizations. In 2008 over 300 volunteers participated in work parties. WWTA also uses volunteer support to conduct long-term restoration projects with Washington State Parks at marine island parks, including a year-long bluff stabilization planting at Kopachuck State Park, a five-year effort to eradicate English Ivy and Scotch Broom from Blind Island, and four years of annual dune grass planting at Blake Island State Park.

THE FUTURE OF THE CASCADIA MARINE TRAIL

The Cascadia Marine Water Trail is a National Recreation Trail, and is one of only 16 water trails to receive the National Millennium Trails designation by the White House. It has grand views of the Cascade and Olympic Mountain along with a variety of wildlife. The preservation of shoreline is important to support life for salmon, bald eagles, orca whales and thousands of other creatures. WWTA promotes low impact water-based recreation, help conserve natural shorelines of Washington State, and educates future advocates for public access to Washington waters. This bill is an important measure to increase opportunities for non-motorized boat access, education, recreation, and interpretation along this internationally known water trail.

Thank you for holding this hearing. I can answer any questions you may have.