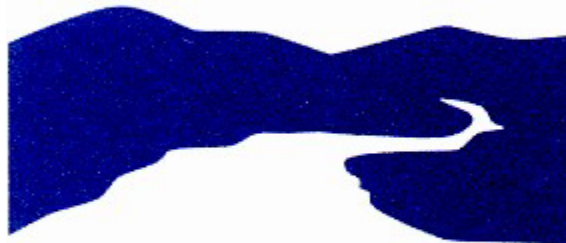

BRINGING RIVERS TO LIFE



American Rivers

FOUNDED 1973

TESTIMONY OF QUINN MCKEW

AMERICAN RIVERS, INC.

ON S.435

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS
SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

September 22, 2005

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.435, the **Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic River Study Act of 2005**. My name is Quinn McKew, and I am the Associate Director for the Wild Rivers program for American Rivers. Since its founding in 1973, American Rivers has worked with our grassroots partners to protect rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and has actively assisted federal agencies, states and local groups with river conservation efforts. American Rivers is a 45,000-member organization committed to the protection and restoration of the nation's outstanding rivers.

I would like to thank Senator Dodd for introducing S. 435, which would amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate a segment of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook in the State of Connecticut for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The Farmington is truly a national treasure, providing a home to the only nesting bald eagles in the state of Connecticut. In recognition of its outstanding fish, wildlife and scenic values and importance to the citizens of Connecticut, the Upper Farmington River was designated a Partnership Wild and Scenic river in 1994. This study bill for the Lower Farmington and Salmon Brook will help advance the protection of the entire river system and has strong local and state support.

The Lower Farmington reflects the beauty and character of Connecticut. Every year, thousands of people canoe, kayak, and fish the waters of the Farmington. They come to visit the state parks, forests and historic mills that dot the river's edge. The river is an historic Atlantic Salmon Fishery, and efforts are underway by the state to restore these

important fish. All these factors - recreational value, rare wildlife, outstanding fisheries, and a rich history - make the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook a natural for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The Farmington River is also a significant economic asset to the surrounding communities. By studying the Lower Farmington, and ultimately including it in the National Wild and Scenic River System, Congress will protect the economies of the communities that border the river. In 2003, North Carolina State University and American Rivers completed an economic study of the designated Farmington Wild and Scenic River. The study shows how the river's pristine character is one of the main attractions that draw visitors to the region. It also shows how deteriorating river conditions could lead to significant revenue loss in the surrounding communities. According to the study, river-based tourism brings nearly \$4 million into communities around the Farmington River each year, and recreational activities on and around the river bring nearly \$9.5 million of economic benefit annually. The study also demonstrated that the river's wild condition significantly increased the value of adjacent lands.

The community-based process that preceded the introduction of S.435 is truly a model of outreach and consensus building. Stakeholders and local governments were consulted every step along the way, leading to strong community support for S. 435. This high level of existing local commitment to protecting the river is a good indicator that long-term protection of the river, through a federal-state-local partnership model of wild and scenic river designation, will be successful. This model is gaining momentum throughout the Northeast and resulted in passage of bills in the 107th Congress to designate the

Eightmile River and the Wekiva, Lower Delaware and White Clay Creek in the 106th Congress. Unplanned growth is a threat to the unique, scenic qualities that are the basis for recreation tourism in the area. The wild and scenic river designation process will ensure a long-term plan for the river that recognizes its significance as a natural resource, and can help nearby towns effectively manage growth.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Subcommittee today.