

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WALTER F. MONDALE ON THE
ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC WATERWAY BILL.

Parks and Recreation Subcommittee
Interior and Insular Affairs Committee.
April 23, 1965

Mr. Chairman, I very much appreciate this opportunity to appear in support of the bill that I introduced with Senator Nelson -- the St. Croix National Scenic Waterway Bill. This legislation will protect and preserve a river and river valley which has always been my favorite. In the years past, I have fished and canoed on that beautiful river and, therefore, I speak about its beauties and attractions through personal knowledge. It is a magnificent natural resource, widely used not only by residents of communities along its banks, but by those in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Its historical background in the development of Minnesota and Wisconsin as States adds immeasurably to our cultural heritage, and continues to be a source of interest to the people in our States. Today much of the river is as it was several centuries ago. One study indicates that the St. Croix Valley was inhabited as far back as 1000 B.C. It is rich in stories of Indian conflicts, fur trade, and logging, then of major importance to the residents of that area.

The key role of the St. Croix River remains today. The lower St. Croix is heavily used as a top-quality recreational

water. Swimming, boating, and fishing are the major uses. All indications are that the future will see even more intensive recreational use of the river and its banks, and demands upon it are expected to multiply by $4\frac{1}{2}$ times by the year 2000.

It is absolutely necessary that measures be initiated now to provide for the increased use that we foresee. We simply cannot afford to lose the benefits we receive from the historical, geological, and recreational character of the river. Its worth is national in scope, for today the St. Croix-Namekagon River System is regarded as the last major river network that remains unpolluted and fit for all types of human use. The wild river portion above Taylors Falls has been preserved from encroachment by industry and development to such an extent that it exists in a wild and primitive state.

Our President, Lyndon, B. Johnson, said on February 8, 1965 that "the time has. . . come to identify and preserve free-flowing stretches of our great scenic rivers before growth and development make the beauty of the unspoiled waterway a memory."

The St. Croix National Scenic Waterway Bill seeks to do just that with the St. Croix-Namekagon River System. In the face of ever-increasing urban sprawl, in the face of the oppressive nature of concrete, steel, and auto exhaust gases found in our cities, we need more than ever a place of refuge and natural beauty, removed from the clamor of the towns and cities. We must move now to protect that river.

I have received hundreds upon hundreds of letters from residents of communities along the St. Croix River and from those in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul asking that we do everything in our power to protect the St. Croix River from becoming polluted and despoiled by urban blight. I think we must listen to their requests. For the St. Croix River is within easy access of thousands of Minnesota and Wisconsin residents, and there is river enough to allow all to enjoy its beauty and peaceful quiet.

I intend to leave the detail and specifics of this legislation and its approach to those experts from the Department of the Interior who will testify before this Committee. But just let me say in passing that it is a new and fresh approach toward preserving our river heritage, accommodating and meeting the special needs of each segment of the waterway. It combines three methods of protecting the river; local zoning in areas where other methods of preservation would cause mass relocation and disruption of land use; scenic easements where land uses are not incompatible of land in those instances where this method is advisable. The cost to the Federal Government will correspondingly be much less.

I also want to point out that this bill does not seek to oust local industry and interests on the Lower St. Croix River. In addition, the recreational development of that area in fact may offer more to those communities immediately adjacent to the river than the development of scattered industry along its shores.

The past history of our country has seen forest lands stripped, our great rivers polluted and eroded, and our countryside criss-crossed by highways, automobiles, exposed utility transmission units, and a whole host of developments detrimental to esthetic and natural values. We often say how wonderful it would have been had our ancestors planned to keep these ugly scars of civilization to a minimum. We ask why they had not more foresight. However, today we have the ability to preserve for future generations a major national resource, one which at least represents a starting point in halting the trend toward ravaging the natural beauty of our landscape. If we have the courage to take decisive action in this session of the Congress on this measure, I think that our children and grandchildren will praise the wisdom and foresight our fathers had in setting this area aside for our use.

I do also want to say in addition that I believe something can be done to assist the counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin in making up the loss of tax revenues by the Federal purchase of private land within those counties, during the period of transition after passage of the Bill. There presently exist formulas by which those counties can be assisted in making that transition. The tax loss will be immediate, but the development of recreational values and interests may take several years.

The counties affected in Minnesota are Washington County, Chisago County, and Pine County. The counties affected in Wisconsin are Pierce, St. Croix, Polk, Burnett, Douglas, Washburn, Sawyer, and Bayfield Counties. It is estimated that the annual tax loss for all of these counties for lands to be acquired in fee by the Federal Government would amount to approximately \$52,930.00. It seems to me that there would be no substantial difficulties involved in assisting these counties.

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for your courtesy in allowing me this opportunity to testify. I strongly urge favorable action on this most important bill.



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